

9. ¶ So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk: (now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord). 10. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the LORD, and wept sore. 11. And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but will give unto thine handmaid a man-child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. 12. And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the LORD, that Eli marked her mouth. 13. Now Hannah, she spake in her heart, only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. 14. And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. 15. And Hannah answered and said: No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD. 16. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. 17. Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. 18. And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

Elkanah had gently reproved Hannah for her inordinate grief, and here we find the good effects of the reproof.

1. It brought her to her meat. She eat and drank, *ver. 9.* She did not harden herself in sorrow, nor grow sullen when she was reproved for it, but when she perceived her husband uneasy that she did not come and eat with them, she cheered up her own spirits as well as she could and came to table. It is as great a piece of self-denial to controul our passions, as it is to controul our appetites.

2. It brought her to her prayers. It put her upon considering, Do I well to be angry? Do I well to fret? What good doth it do me? Instead of hindering the burden thus upon my own shoulders, had I not better ease myself of it, and cast it upon the Lord by prayer? Elkanah had said, *Am not I better to thee than ten sons?* Which perhaps occasioned her to think within herself, whether he be so or no, God is, and therefore to him will I apply myself, and before him will I pour out my complaint, and try what relief that will give me. If ever she will make a more solemn address than ordinary to the throne of grace upon this errand, now is the time. They are at Shiloh, at the door of the tabernacle, where God had promised to meet his people, and which was the *house of prayer*. They had newly offered their peace-offerings to obtain the favour of God and all good, and in token of their communion with him, and taking the comfort of their being accepted of him, they had feasted upon the sacrifice, and now it was proper to put up her prayer in the virtue of that sacrifice; for the peace-offerings typified Christ's mediation as well as the sin-offerings, for by it not only atonement is made for sin, but the audience and acceptance of our prayers, and an answer of peace to them, is obtained for us: to that sacrifice in all our supplications we must have an eye.

Now concerning Hannah's prayer we may observe,

1. The warm and lively devotion that was in it; which appeared in several instances for our direction in prayer.

(1.) She improved the present grief and trouble of her spirit, for the exciting and quickening of her pious affections in prayers. *Being in bitterness of soul she prayed,* *ver. 10.* This good use we should make of our afflictions, they should make us the more lively in our addresses to God. Our blessed Saviour himself *being in agony prayed more earnestly,* Luke xxii. 44.

(2.) She mingled tears with her prayers. It was not a dry prayer, she wept sore, like a true Israelite, she *wept and made supplication,* Hof. xii. 4. With an eye to the tender mercy of our God, who knows the troubled soul; the prayer came from her heart, as the tears from her eyes.

(3.) She was very particular, and yet very modest in her petition. She begged a child, a man child, that it might be fit to serve in the tabernacle. God gives us leave in prayer, not only to ask good things in general, but to instance in that special good thing we most need and desire. Yet she saith not as Rachel, *Give me children,* Gen. xxx. 1. She will be very thankful for one.

(4.) She made a solemn vow or promise that if God would give her a son, she would give it up to God, *ver. 11.* He would be by birth a Levite, and so devoted to the service of God, but he should be by her vow a Nazarite, and his very childhood should be sacred: It is probable she had acquainted Elkanah with her purpose before, and had had his consent and approbation. Note, 1. Parents have a right to dedicate their children to God, as living sacrifices and spiritual priests; and an obligation is thereby laid upon them to serve God faithfully *all the days of their life.* 2. It is very proper when we are in pursuit of any mercy, to bind our own souls with a bond, that if God give it us we will devote it to his honour, and cheerfully use it in his service. Not that thereby we can pretend to merit the gift, but thus we are qualified for it, and for the comfort of it. In hope of mercy, let us promise duty.

(5.) She spoke all this softly that none could hear her. Her lips moved, but her voice was not heard, *ver. 13.* Hereby she testified her belief of God's knowledge of the heart, and the desires of that. Thoughts are words to him, nor is he one of those gods that must be *cried aloud to,* 1 Kings xviii. 27. It was likewise an instance of her humility and holy shame-facedness in her approach to God, she was none of those that *made her voice to be heard on high,* Isa. lviii. 4. It was a secret prayer, and therefore though made in a public place, yet it was thus made secretly, and not as the Pharisees prayed, *to be seen of men.* It is true, prayer is not a thing we have reason to be ashamed of, but we must avoid all appearances of ostentation. Let what passes between God and our souls be kept to ourselves.

2. The hard censure she fell under for it. Eli was now high-priest, and judge in Israel, he sat upon a seat in the temple, to oversee what was done there, *ver. 9.* The tabernacle is here called the temple, because it was now fixed, and served all the purposes of a temple. There Eli sat to receive addresses and give direction, and somewhere, it is likely in a private corner,

he espied Hannah at her prayers, and by her unusual carriage fancied she was in drink, and spoke to her accordingly, *ver. 14.* *How long wilt thou be drunken?* The very imputation that Peter and the apostles fell under, when the Holy Ghost gave them utterance, Acts ii. 13. Perhaps in this degenerate age, it was no strange thing to see drunken women at the door of the tabernacle; for otherwise one would think the lust of Hophni and Phineas could not have found so easy a prey there, *chap. ii. 22.* Eli took Hannah for one of these. It is one ill effect of the abounding of iniquity, and its becoming fashionable, that it often gives occasion to suspect the innocent. When a disease is epidemical, every one is suspected to be tainted with it.

Now, (1.) This was Eli's fault, and a great fault it was to pass so severe a censure without better observation or information. If his own eyes were already waxen dim, he should have employed those about him to enquire. Drunkards use to be noisy and turbulent, but the poor woman was silent and composed. His fault was the worse, that he was the priest of the Lord, who should have had *compassion on the ignorant,* Heb. v. 2. Note, it ill becomes us to be rash and hasty in our censures of others, and to be forward to believe people guilty of ill things, while either the matter of fact on which the censure is grounded is doubtful and unproved, or it is capable of a good construction. Charity commands us to hope the best concerning all, and forbids censoriousness. Paul had a very good information, when he did but *partly believe,* 1 Cor. xi. 18. hoping it was not so. Especially we ought to be cautious how we censure the devotions of others, lest we call that hypocrisy, enthusiasm, or superstition, which is really the fruit of an honest zeal, and is accepted of God.

(2.) It was Hannah's affliction; and a great affliction it was, added to all the rest; vinegar to the wounds of her spirit. She had been reproved by Elkanah, because she would not eat and drink, and now to be reproached by Eli, as if she had eaten and drank too much, was very hard. Note, It is no new thing for those that do well to be ill thought of, and we must not think it strange if at any time it be our lot.

3. Hannah's humble vindication of herself from this crime with which she was charged. She bore it admirably well; did not retort the charge, and upbraid him with the debauchery of his own sons, did not bid him look at home and restrain them: Did not tell him how ill it became one in his place, thus to abuse a poor sorrowful worshipper at the throne of grace. When we are at any time unjustly censured, we have need to set a double watch before the door of our lips, that we do not recriminate and return censure for censure. Hannah thought it enough to vindicate herself, and so must we, *ver. 15, 16.* (1.) In justice to herself she expressly denies the charge; speaks to him with all possible respect, calls him *my lord*; intimates how very desirous she was to stand right in his opinion, and how loth to lie under his censure. No, my lord, it is not as you suspect, I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, nor any at all, (though it was proper enough to be given to one of such a *heavy heart,* Prov. xxxi. 6.) much less to any excess: Therefore *count not thy handmaid for a daughter of Belial.* Note, Drunkards are children of Belial; women drunkards particularly: Children of the wicked one; Children of disobedience; Children that will not endure the yoke, else they would not be drunk, and much more they are so when they are drunk. They that cannot govern themselves, will not bear that any one else should. Hannah owns, the crime had been very great, if she had indeed been guilty of it, and he might justly have shut her out of God's house; but the very manner of speaking in her own defence, was sufficient to demonstrate that she was not drunk. (2.) In justice to him, she gives an account of her present carriage, which had given occasion to his suspicion. *I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit,* dejected and discomposed, and that is the reason I do not look as other people, the eyes not red with wine but weeping; And at this time I have not been talking to myself, as drunkards and fools do, but I have been pouring out my soul before the Lord, who hears and understands the language of the heart, and this out of the abundance of my complaint and grief. She had been more than ordinary fervent in prayer to God, and that she tells him was the true reason of the transport and disorder she seemed to be in. Note, When we are unjustly censured, we should endeavour not only to clear ourselves, but to satisfy our brethren, by giving them a just and true account of that which they misapprehended.

4. The atonement Eli made for his rash unfriendly censure, by a kind and fatherly benediction, *ver. 17.* He did not (as many are apt to do in such a case) take it for an affront to have his mistake rectified, and to be convinced of his error, nor did it put him out of humour; but, on the contrary, he now encouraged Hannah's devotions, as much as before he had discountenanced them: not only intimated that he was satisfied of her innocence by those words, *Go in peace,* but being high-priest, as one having authority, he blessed her in the name of the Lord, and though he knew not what the particular blessing was she had been praying for, yet he puts his *Amen* to it, so good an opinion had he now conceived of her prudence and piety. *The God of Israel grant thee thy petition,* whatever it is, *that thou hast asked of him.* Note, by our meek and humble carriage towards those that reproach us, because they do not know us, we may perhaps make them our friends, and turn their censures of us into prayers for us.

5. The great satisfaction of mind with which Hannah now went away, *ver. 18.* She begged the continuance of Eli's good opinion of her, and his good prayers for her, and then she went her way, and did eat what remained of the peace-offerings, none of which was to be left until the morning, and her countenance was no more sad: No more as it had been, giving marks of inward trouble and discomposure; but she looked pleasant and cheerful, and all was well. Why what was the matter? Whence came this sudden happy change? She had by prayer committed her case to God, and left it with him, and now she was no more perplexed about it. She had prayed for herself, and Eli had prayed for her, and she believed God would either give her the mercy she had prayed for, or make up the want of it to her some other way. Note, Prayer is heart's-ease to a gracious soul; the seed of Jacob have often found it so, being confident that God will never say unto them, *Seek ye me in vain,* see Phil. iv. 6, 7. prayer will smooth the countenance; it should do so.

19. ¶ And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the LORD, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the LORD remembered her. 20. Wherefore it came to pass when the time was come about, after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, *saying,* Because I have asked him of the LORD. 21. And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. 22. But Hannah went not, for she said unto her husband, *I will not go up until*

until the child be weaned, and *then* I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever. 23. And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him: only the LORD establish his word: so the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him. 24. ¶ And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child *was* young. 25. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. 26. And she said, O my lord, *as thy soul liveth*, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. 27. For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: 28. Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there.

Here is, 1. The return of Elkanah and his family to their own habitations, when the days appointed for the feast were over, *ver. 19.* Observe how they improved their time at the tabernacle: every day they were there, even that which was fixed for their journey home, they worshipped God. And they rose up early to do it. It is good to begin the day with God. Let him that is the first have the first. They had a journey before them, and a family of children to take with them, and yet they would not stir till they had worshipped God together. Prayer and provender do not hinder a journey. They had spent several days now in religious worship, and yet they attended once more: we should not be weary of well-doing.

2. The birth and name of this desired son. At length the Lord remembered Hannah, the very thing she desired, *ver. 11.* and more she needed not desire, that was enough, for then she conceived and bare a son. Though God seem long to forget his people's burdens, troubles, cares, and prayers, yet he will at length make it to appear that they are not out of his mind. This son the mother called Samuel, *ver. 20.* Some make the etymology of it to be much the same as that of Ishmael, *heard of God*, because the mother's prayers were remarkably heard, and he was an answer to them. Others, because of the reason she gives for the name, make it to signify, *asked of God*; it comes much to one; she designed by it to perpetuate the remembrance of God's favours to her in answering her prayers. Thus she designed upon every mention of his name to take the comfort to herself, and to give God the glory of that gracious condescension. Note, Mercies in answer to prayer are to be remembered with peculiar expressions of thankfulness, as *Psal. cxvi. 1, 2.* How many seasonable deliverances and supplies may we call Samuels, *asked of God*; and whatever is so, we are in a special manner engaged to devote to him? Hannah intended by this name to put her son in mind of the obligations he was under to be the Lord's, in consideration of this, that he was asked of God, and was at the same time dedicated to him. A child of prayer is in a special manner bound to be a good child. Lemuel's mother minds him that he was the *son of her vows*, *Prov. xxxi. 2.*

3. The close attendance Hannah gave to the nursing of him, not only because he was dear to her, but because he was devoted to God, and for him she nursed him. She therefore nursed him herself, and did not hang him on another's breast. We ought to take care of our children, not only with an eye to the law of nature, as they are ours, but with an eye to the covenant of grace, as they are given up to God. See *Ezek. xvi. 20, 21.* This sanctifies the nursing of them, when it is done unto the Lord.

Elkanah went up every year to worship at the tabernacle, and particularly to perform his vow; perhaps some vow he had made distinct from Hannah's, if God would give him a son by her, *ver. 21.* But Hannah, though she had a dear love for the courts of God's house, begged leave of her husband to stay at home, for the women were not under any obligation to go up to the three yearly feasts, as the men were. However Hannah had used to go, but now desired to be excused, (1.) Because she would not be so long absent from her nursery, *Can a woman forget her sucking child?* We may suppose she kept constant at home, for if she had gone any whither, she would have gone to Shiloh. Note, God will have mercy, and not sacrifice. Those that are detained from public ordinances by the nursing and tending of little children, may take comfort from this instance, and believe, that if they do that with an eye to God, he will graciously accept them therein; and though they tarry at home they shall divide the spoil. (2.) Because she would not go up to Shiloh till her son was big enough, not only to be taken thither, but to be left there; for if once she took him thither, she thought she could never find in her heart to bring him back again. Note, Those who are stedfastly resolved to pay their vows, may yet see good cause to defer the payment of them: *Every thing is beautiful in its season.* No animal was accepted in sacrifice, till it had been for some time under the dam, *Lev. xxi. 27.* Fruit is best when it is ripe. Elkanah agrees to what she proposed, *ver. 23. Do what seemeth thee good.* So far was he from delighting to cross her, that he referred it entirely to her. *Behold, how good and pleasant a thing it is* when yoke-fellows thus draw even in the yoke, and accommodate themselves to one another; each thinking well of what the other doth, especially in works of piety and charity. He adds a prayer, *Only the Lord establish his word*, i. e. God preserve the child through the perils of his infancy, that the solemn vow which God signified his acceptance of, giving us the child, may be performed in its season, and so the whole matter may be accomplished. Note, Those that have in sincerity devoted their children to God, may with comfort pray for them, that God will establish the world sealed to them, at the same time that they were sealed for him.

4. The solemn entering of this child into the service of the sanctuary. We may take it for granted he was presented to the Lord at forty days old, as all the first-born were, *Luke ii. 22, 23.* but that is not mentioned, because there was nothing in it singular; but now he was weaned, he was presented, not to be redeemed. Some think it was as soon as he was weaned from the breast, which the Jews say was not till he was three years old; it is said he gave him suck till she had weaned him, *ver. 23.* others think it was not till he was weaned from childish things, at eight or ten years old. But I see no inconveniency in admitting such an extraordinary child as this into the tabernacle at three years old, to be educated among the children of the priests. It is said, *ver. 24. the child was young*, but being intelligent above his years was no trouble. None can begin too soon to be religious. *The child was a child*, so the Hebrew reads it, in his learning age; *For whom shall he teach knowledge*, but them that are newly weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts, *Isa. xlviii. 9.*

No. XLI.

Observe how she presented her child.

1. With a sacrifice; no less than three bullocks, with a meat-offering for each, *ver. 24.* A bullock perhaps for each year of the child's life. Or, one for a burnt-offering, another for a sin-offering, and the third for a peace-offering. So far was she from thinking that by presenting her son to God she made God her debtor, that she thought it requisite by these thank-offerings to seek God's acceptance of her living sacrifice. All our covenants with God for ourselves and ours, must be made by sacrifice, the great sacrifice.

2. With a grateful acknowledgement of God's goodness in answer to prayer. This she makes to Eli, because he had encouraged her to hope for an answer of peace, *ver. 26, 27. For this child I prayed.* Here it was obtained by prayer, and here it is resigned to the prayer-hearing God. You have forgot me, my lord, but I who now appear to pleasant, am the woman, the very same, that three years ago stood by thee here weeping and praying, and this was the child I prayed for. Answers of prayer may thus be humbly triumphed in to the glory of God. Here is a living testimony for God, I am his witness that he is gracious. See *Psal. lxxvi. 16—19.* For this mercy, this comfort, I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition. See *Psal. xxxiv. 2, 4, 6.* Hannah doth not mind Eli of it by the same tokens that he thought she was drunk; doth not say I am the woman that you past that severe censure upon, what do you think of me now? Good men ought not to be upbraided with their infirmities and oversights; they have themselves repented of them, let them hear no more of them.

3. With a full surrender of all her interests in this child unto the Lord, *ver. 28. I have lent him to the Lord as long as he liveth.* And she repeats it, because she would never revoke it, *he shall be* (a deadand) *lent or given to the Lord.* Not that she designed to call for him back, as we do what we lend, but she used this word *Shaal*, *he lent* because it is the same word that she had used before, *ver. 20. I asked* him of the Lord, only in another conjugation. And, *ver. 27. the Lord gave me the petition which I asked*, *Shaal* in Kal, therefore *I have lent him*, *Hiphil*, the same word in *Hiphil*; and so it gives another etymology of his name Samuel, not only *asked for God*, but *lent to God.* And observe, (1.) Whatever we give to God, it is what we have first asked and received from him. All our gifts to him were first his gifts to us. *Of thine own, Lord, have we given thee*, *1 Chron. xxix. 14—16.* (2.) Whatever we give to God, may upon this account be said to be lent to him; that though we may not recall it, as a thing lent, yet he will certainly repay it, with interest, to our unspeakable advantage, particularly what is given to his poor, *Prov. xxi. 17.* When by baptism we dedicate our children to God, let us remember that they are his before by a sovereign right, and that they are ours till he calls them more to our comfort. Hannah resigns him to the Lord, not for a certain term of years, as children are let apprentice, but *durante vita*, *as long as he liveth he shall be lent unto the Lord*; a Nazirite for him. Such an our covenant with God be, a marriage covenant, as long as we live we must be his; and never forsake him.

Lastly, The child Samuel did his part beyond what could have been expected from one of his years; for of him that seems to be spoken, *he worshipped the Lord there*, i. e. *he said his prayers.* He was, no doubt, extraordinary forward, and we have known children that have discovered some sense of religion very young; and his mother, designing him for the sanctuary, took particular care to train him up to that which was to be his work in the Sanctuary. Note, Little children should learn betimes to worship God. Their parents should instruct them in it, and bring them to it, put them upon doing it as well as they can, and God will graciously accept them, and teach them to do better.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter we have, (1.) *Hannah's song of thanksgiving to God for his favour to her, in giving her Samuel.* *ver. 1—10.* (2.) *Their return to their family, with Eli's blessing.* *ver. 11—20.* (3.) *The increase of their family.* *ver. 21.* (4.) *Samuel's growth and improvement.* *ver. 11, 18, 21, 26.* and the care Hannah took to clothe him, *ver. 19.* (5.) *The great wickedness of Eli's sons.* *ver. 12—17—22.* (6.) *The over-mild reproof that Eli gave them for it.* *ver. 23—25.* (7.) *The justly dreadful message God sent them by a prophet, threatening the ruin of his family for the wickedness of his son.* *ver. 27—36.*

1. **A**ND Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD; mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies: because I rejoice in thy salvation. 2. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. 3. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. 4. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. 5. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. 6. The LORD killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. 7. The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. 8. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and he hath set the world upon them. 9. He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. 10. The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces: out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth, and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

We have here Hannah's thanksgiving, dictated not only by the spirit of prayer, but by the spirit of prophecy. Her petition for the mercy she desired, we had before, *chap. i. 11.* and here her return of praise; in both, *out of the abundance of a heart deeply affected*, in the former with her own wants, and in the latter with God's goodness, *her mouth spake*.

Observe in general, (1.) When she had received mercy from God, she owned it with thankfulness to his praise. Not like the nine lepers, *Luke xvii. 17.* Praise is our rent, our tribute, we are unjust if we do not pay it. (2.) The mercy she had received was an answer to prayer, and therefore she thought herself especially obliged to give thanks for it. What we win by prayer, we may wear with comfort, and must wear with praise. (3.) Her thanksgiving is here called a prayer. *Hannah prayed*: for thanksgiving is an essential part of prayer. In every address to God we must express a grateful regard to him as our benefactor. Nay, and thanksgiving for mercies received, shall be accepted as a petition for further mercy. (4.) For this particular mercy she had received from God, she takes occasion, with an elevated and enlarged heart, to speak glorious things of God, and of his government of the world, for the good of his church. Whatever at any time gives rise to our praises, in this manner they should be raised. (5.) Her prayer was mental, *her voice was not heard*; but in her thanksgiving she spake that all might hear her. She made her supplications with *groanings that could not be uttered*, but now her lips are opened to *shew forth God's praise*. (6.) This thanksgiving is here left upon record for the encouragement of those of the weaker sex to attend the throne of grace; God will regard their prayers and praises. The Virgin Mary's song has great affinity with this of Hannah, *Luke i. 46.*

Three things we have in this thanksgiving.

1. Hannah's triumph in God, in his glorious perfections, and the great things he had done for her, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* Observe,

(1.) What great things she saith of God. She takes little notice of the particular mercy she was now rejoicing in, doth not commend Samuel for the prettiest child, the towardliest, the wittiest of his age, she ever saw, as fond parents are too apt to do: no, she overlooks the gift, and praiseth the giver; whereas most forget the giver, and fasten only on the gift. Every stream should lead us to the fountain; and the favours we receive from God, should raise our admiration of the infinite perfections there are in God. There may be other Samuels, but no other Jehovah. *There is none beside thee.* Note, God is to be praised as a peerless being, and of unparalleled perfection; the glory is due unto his name, to own not only that there is none like him, but none beside him. All others were pretenders, *Psal. xviii. 31.*

Four of God's glorious attributes Hannah here celebrates the glory of. (1.) *His unspotted purity.* This is that attribute which is most praised in the upper world, by those that always behold his face, *1 Jo. vi. 3. Rev. iv. 8.* When Israel triumphed over the Egyptians, God was praised *as glorious in holiness*, *Exod. xv. 11.* So here, in Hannah's triumph, *There is none holy as the Lord.* It is the rectitude of his nature, his infinite agreement with himself, and the equity of his government and judgment, in all the administrations of both. At the remembrance of this we ought to give thanks.

(2.) *His almighty power.* *Neither is there any rock, or any strength, (for so the word is sometimes rendered) like our God.* Hannah had experienced a mighty support by laying herself upon him, and therefore speaks as she had found, and seems to refer to that of Moses, *Deut. xxxii. 21.* (3.) His unsearchable wisdom. The Lord, the judge of all, is a God of knowledge; he clearly and perfectly sees into the character of every person, and the merits of every cause; and he gives knowledge and understanding to those that seek it of him. (4.) *His unerring justice; by him actions are weighed.* His own are so, in his eternal counsels; the actions of the children of men are so, in the balances of his judgment; so that he will *render to every man according to his work*, and is not mistaken in what any man is or doth.

(2.) How she solaceth herself in these things. What we give God the glory of, we may take the comfort of: Hannah doth so. (1.) In holy joy. *My heart rejoiceth in the Lord*; not so much in her son, as in her God; he is to be the gladness of our joy, *Psal. xlii. 4.* and our joy must not terminate in any thing short of him. *I rejoice in thy salvation*; not only in this particular favour to me, but in the salvation of thy people Israel, those especially which this child will be an instrument of, and that above all, by Christ, which those are but the types of. (2.) In holy triumph. *My horn is exalted*; not only my reputation gained by my having a son, but greatly raised by having such a son. We read of some of the singers whom David appointed to lift up the horn, an instrument of music, in praising God, *1 Chron. xxv. 5.* so that *my horn is exalted*, means this, my praises are very much elevated to an unusual strain. *Exalted in the Lord*; God is to have the honour of our exaltations, and in him must we triumph. *My mouth is enlarged*, i. e. now I have wherewith to answer them that reproached me; he that has his quiver full of arrows, his house full of children, shall not be ashamed to speak with the enemy in the gate, *Psal. cxxvii. 5.*

(3.) How she herewith silences those that set up themselves as rivals with God, and rebels against him, *ver. 3.* *Talk no more so exceedingly proudly.* Let not Peninnah and her children upbraid her any more with her confidence in God, and praying to him, at length she found it not in vain. See *Mic. vii. 13.* *Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her that said, where is thy God?* Or perhaps it was below her to take so much notice of Peninnah, and her malice, in this song; but this is intended as a check to the insolence of the Philistines, and other enemies of God and Israel, that *set their mouth against the heavens*, *Psal. lxxiii. 9.* let this put them to silence and shame; he that has thus judged for me against mine adversary, will judge for his people against all theirs.

2. The notice she takes of the wisdom and sovereignty of the divine providence, in its disposal of the affairs of the children of men; such are the vicissitudes of them, and such the strange and sudden turns and revolutions of them, that is often found a very short step between the height of prosperity and the depth of adversity: *God has not only set the one over against the other*, *Ecc. vii. 14.* but the one very near the other, and no gulf fixed between them, that we may rejoice as though we rejoiced not, and weep as though we wept not.

(1.) The strong are soon weakened, and the weak are soon strengthened, when God pleaseth, *ver. 4.* On the one hand, if he speak the word, *the bows of the mighty men are broken*, they are disarmed, disabled to do as they have done, and as they have designed; they have gone by the worse in battle, that seemed upon all accounts to have had the advantage on their side, and thought themselves sure of victory. See, *Psal. xlvii. 9.—xxvii. 15—17.* Particular persons are soon weakened by sickness and age, and they find that the bow doth not long abide in strength; many a mighty man that has gloried in his might hath found a deceitful bow, that failed him when he trusted to it. On the other hand, if the Lord speak the word, they that stumbled through weakness, that were so feeble that they could not go straight or steady, are *girt with strength*, in body and mind, and are able to bring great things to pass. They that were weakened by sickness return to their vigour, *Job xxxiii. 25.* by sorrow shall recover their comfort, which will *confirm the weak hands and the feeble knees*, *Isa. xxxv. 3.* Victory turns

in favour of that side that was given up for gone, and even *the lame take the prey*, *Isa. xxxiii. 23.*

(2.) The rich are soon impoverished, and the poor strangely enriched of a sudden, *ver. 5.* Providence sometimes doth so blast men's estates and cross their endeavours, and with a fire not blown consume their increase, that they that were full, their barns full, and their bags full, their *houses full of good things*, *Job xxii. 18.* and their *bellies full of these hid treasures*, *Psal. xvii. 14.* have been reduced to such straits and extremities as to want the necessary supports of life, and to *hire out themselves for bread*, and they must dig, since to *beg they are ashamed*. *Riches flee away*, *Prov. xxiii. 5.* and leave those miserable that, when they had them, placed their happiness in them. To them that have been full and free, poverty and slavery must needs be doubly grievous. But, on the other hand, sometimes providence so orders it, that *they that were hungered ceased*, i. e. ceased to hire out themselves for bread as they had done, having, by God's blessing on their industry, got beforehand in the world, and enough to live upon with ease, *they shall hunger no more nor thirst any more*. This is not to be ascribed to fortune, nor merely to men's wisdom or folly, *Riches are not to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill*, *Ecc. ix. 11.* nor is it always men's own fault that they become poor, but *ver. 7.* *The Lord maketh some poor, and maketh others rich*, the impoverishing of one is the enriching of another, and it is God's doing: To some he gives power to get wealth, from others he takes away power to keep the wealth they have. Are we poor? *God made us poor*, which is good reason why we should be content, and reconcile ourselves to our condition; Are we rich? *God made us rich*, which is a good reason why we should be thankful, and serve him cheerfully in the abundance of good things he gives us. It may be understood of the same person: those that were rich God makes them poor, and after a while makes them rich again, as Job: he gave, he takes away, and then gives again. Let not the rich be proud and secure, for God can soon make them poor; let not the poor despond and despair, for God can in due time enrich them again.

(3.) Empty families are replenished, and numerous families diminished and made few. This is the instance that comes close to the occasion of the thanksgiving: *The barren hath born seven*, meaning herself, for though at present she had but one son, yet that one being a Nazarite, devoted to God, and employed in his immediate service, he was to her as good as seven. Or, it is the language of her faith, now she has one she hopes for more, and was not disappointed, she had five more, *ver. 21.* so that if we reckon Samuel but for two, as we may well, she has the number she promised herself, the *barren hath borne seven*, while on the other hand, *she that hath many children is waxed feeble*, and hath left bearing; she saith no more, Peninnah is now mortified, and crest-fallen: The tradition of the Jews is, that still when Hannah bore one child, Peninnah buried two. There are many instances both of the increase of families that were inconsiderable, and the extinguishing of families that made a figure, *Job xxii. 23. Psal. cvii. 38; &c.*

(4.) God is the sovereign Lord of life and death: *ver. 6.* *The Lord killeth and maketh alive.* Understand it, (1.) Of God's sovereign dominion and universal agency, in the lives and deaths of the children of men. He preludes in births and burials. Whenever any die, it is God that directs the arrows of death, *the Lord killeth*, Death is his messenger, strikes whom and when he bids, none are brought to the dust, but it is he that brings them down, for in his hands are the *keys of death and the grave*, *Rev. i. 18.* whenever any are born, it is he that *makes them alive, none knows what is the way of the spirit*, but this we know, that it comes from the *Father of spirits*. Whenever any are recovered from sickness, and delivered from imminent perils, it is God that bringeth up, *for to him belong the issues from death*. (2.) Of the distinction he makes between some and others, he *killeth some, and maketh*, that is, keepeth others alive that were in the same danger, in war, suppose, or pestilence. Two in a bed together, it may be, one taken by death, and the other left alive, *even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes*. Some that were most likely to live brought down to the grave, and others that were as likely to die brought up: for living and dying do not go by likelihoods. God's providences towards some are killing, ruining to their comforts; and towards others at the same time reviving. (3.) Of the change he makes with one and the same person. *He killeth and bringeth down to the grave*, i. e. he brings even to death's doors, and then revives and raiseth up, when even life was despaired of, and a sentence of death received, *2 Cor. i. 8, 9.* *turns to destruction*, and then faith, *return*, *Psal. xc. 3.* Nothing is too hard for God to do, no not the quickening of the dead, and putting life into dry bones.

(5.) Advancement and abasement are both from him: He bringeth some low, and *lifteth up* others, *ver. 7.* humbles the proud, and gives grace and honour to the lowly; lays those in the dust that would vie with the God above them, and tramples upon all about them, *Job xl. 12, 13.* but *lifteth up* those with his salvation that humbled themselves before him, *Jam. iv. 10.* Or, it may be understood of the same persons, those whom he had brought low, when they are sufficiently humbled he *lifteth them up*. This is enlarged upon, *ver. 8.* *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust*, a low and mean condition, nay, from the dunghill, a base and servile condition, loathed and despised, *to set them among princes*, See *Psal. cxiii. 7.* Promotion comes not by chance, but from the counsel of God, which often prefers those that were very unlikely, and that men thought very unworthy. Joseph and Daniel, Moses and David were thus strangely advanced, from a prison to a palace, from a sheep-hook to a scepter. The princes they are set among may be tempted to disdain them, but God can establish the honour which he gives thus surprisingly, and make them even to inherit the throne of glory. Let not those whom providence has thus preferred be upbraided with the dust and dunghill they are raised out of, for the meaner their beings were the more are they favoured, and God glorified in their advancement, if it be by lawful and honourable means.

Lastly, A reason is given for all these dispensations, which obliges us to acquiesce in them, how surprising soever they are, *for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's*. (1.) If we understand it literally, it speaks God's almighty power which cannot be controlled. He upholds the whole creation, founded the earth, and still sustains it by the word of his power. What cannot he do in the affairs of families and kingdoms, far beyond our conception and expectation, *who hangs the earth upon nothing?* *Job xxvi. 7.* But, (2.) If we understand it figuratively, it speaks his uncontested sovereignty, which cannot be disputed: The princes and great ones of the earth, the directors of states and governments, are the *pillars of the earth*, *Psal. lxxv. 3.* On the hinges the affairs of the world seem to turn, but they are the *Lord's*, *Psal. xlvii. 9.* From him they have their power, and therefore he may advance whom he pleases, and who may say, *What dost thou?*

3. Here is a prediction of the preservation and advancement of all God's faithful friends, and the destruction of all his and their enemies. Having testified her joyful triumph in what God had done and is doing, she concludes with joyful hopes of what he would do, *ver. 9, 10.* Pious affections (saith Bishop Patrick) in those days, rose up many times to the height of prophecy, whereby God continued in that nation his true religion, in the midst of their idolatrous inclinations. This prophecy may refer, (1.) More immediately to the government of Israel by Samuel, and David whom he

was employed to anoint. The Israelites, God's saints, should be protected and delivered; the Philistines, their enemies, should be conquered and subdued, and particularly by *thunder*, chap. vii. 10. Their dominions should be enlarged, king David strengthened and greatly exalted, and Israel that in the time of the judges had made so small figure, and had much ado to subsist, should now shortly become great and considerable, and give law to all its neighbours: a mighty change that was, and the birth of Samuel was as it were the dawning of that day. But (2.) We have reason to think that this prophecy looks further to the kingdom of Christ, and the administration of that kingdom of grace, of which she now comes to speak, having spoken so largely of the kingdom of providence. And here is the first time, that we meet with the name Messiah, or his anointed. The ancient expositors, both Jewish and Christian, make it to look beyond David, to the Son of David; glorious things are here spoken of the kingdom of the Mediator, both before and since his incarnation, for the method of the administration of it, both by the eternal Word, and by that Word made flesh, is much the same.

Concerning that kingdom we are here assured,

1. That all the loyal subjects of it shall be carefully and powerfully protected, *ver. 9. He will keep the feet of his saints.* There is a people in the world that are God's saints, his select and sanctified ones; and he will keep their feet, *i. e.* all that belongs to them shall be under his protection, till it comes to their very feet, the lowest part of the body. If he will keep their feet, much more their head and hearts: or, he will keep their feet, *i. e.* he will secure the ground they stand on, and establish their goings; he will set a guard of grace upon their affections and actions, that their feet may neither wander out of the way or stumble in the way. When their feet are ready to slip, *Psal. lxxiii. 2. his mercy holdeth them up, Psal. xciv. 18. and keepeth them from falling, Jude 24.* While we keep God's ways he will keep our feet. See *Psal. xxvii. 23, 24.*

2. That all the powers engaged against it shall not be able to affect the ruin of it. By strength no man shall prevail. God's strength is engaged for the church, and while it is so, man's strength shall not prevail against it. The church seems destitute of strength, her friends few and feeble, but prevalency doth not go by human strength, *Psal. xxxiii. 16.* God neither needs it for him (*Psal. cxlviii. 10.*) nor dreads it against him.

3. That all the enemies of it will certainly be broken and brought down. *The wicked shall be silent in darkness, ver. 9.* they shall be struck both blind and dumb, not be able to see their way, nor have any thing to say for themselves. Dipped sinners are sentenced to utter darkness, and in it they will be for ever speechless, *Matt. xxii. 12, 13.* The wicked are called *The adversaries of the Lord*, and it is foretold, *ver. 10.* that they shall be broken to pieces. Their design against his kingdom among men will all be dashed, and they themselves destroyed; how can they speed better that are in arms against omnipotence! See *Luke xix. 27.* God has many ways of doing it, and, rather than fail, from heaven shall he thunder upon them, and so not only put them in terror and consternation, but bring them to destruction: Who can stand before God's thunderbolts?

4. That the conquests and commands of this kingdom shall extend themselves to distant regions; *The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth.* David's victories and dominions reached far, but the utmost parts of the earth are promised to the Messiah for his possession, *Psal. ii. 8.* to be either reduced to his golden scepter, or ruined by his iron rod. God is judge of all, and he will judge for his people, against his and their enemies, *Psal. cx. 5, 6.*

5. That the power and honour of Messiah the prince shall grow and increase more and more. *He shall give strength unto this king,* for the accomplishing of his great undertaking, (*Psal. lxxxix. 21.* and see *Luke xxii. 43.*) strengthen him to go through the difficulties of his humiliation, and in his exaltation he will lift up the head, *Psal. cx. 7.* lift up the horn, the power and honour of his anointed, and make him higher than the kings of the earth, *Psal. lxxxix. 27.* This crowns the triumph, and is more than any thing the matter of her exaltation. Her horn is exalted, *ver. 1.* because she foresees the horn of the Messiah will be so. This secures the hope, the subjects of Christ's kingdom will be safe, and the enemies of it will be ruined for the Anointed, the Lord Christ is girt with strength, and is able to save and destroy unto the uttermost.

11. And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house; and the child did minister unto the LORD before Eli the priest. 12. ¶ Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial, they knew not the LORD. 13. And the priest's custom with the people was, that, when any man offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand: 14. And he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or cauldron, or pot; all that the flesh-hook brought up the priest took for himself: so they did in Shiloh, unto all the Israelites that came thither. 15. Also before they burnt the fat, the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest, for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. 16. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth: then he would answer him, Nay, but thou shalt give it me now: and if not, I will take it by force. 17. Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the LORD: for men abhorred the offering of the LORD. 18. ¶ But Samuel ministered before the LORD, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. 19. Moreover, his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. 20. ¶ And Eli blessed Elkanah, and his wife, and said, The LORD give thee seed of this woman, for the loan which is lent to the LORD. And they went unto their own home. 21. And the LORD visited Hannah, so that she conceived, and bare three sons, and two daughters: and the child Samuel grew before the LORD. 22. ¶ Now Eli was very old, and heard all that his sons did unto all Israel, and how they lay with the women that assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 23. And

he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings, by all this people. 24. Nay, my sons: for it is no good report that I hear; ye make the LORD's people to transgress. 25. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the LORD, who shall intreat for him? Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, because the LORD would slay them. 26. (And the child Samuel grew on, and was in favour both with the LORD, and also with men.)

In these verses we have the good character and posture of Elkanah's family, and the bad character and posture of Eli's family; the account of these two is observably interwoven throughout this whole paragraph; as if the historian intended to set the one over against the other, that they might set off one another. The devotion and good order of Elkanah's family aggravated the iniquity of Eli's house; while the wickedness of Eli's sons made Samuel's early piety shine the more bright and illustrious.

First, let us see how well things went in Elkanah's family, and how much better than formerly.

1. Eli dismissed them from the house of the Lord, when they had entered their little son there, with a blessing, *ver. 20.* He blessed as one having authority; *The Lord give thee more children of this woman, for the loan which is lent to the Lord.* If Hannah had then had many children, it had not been such a generous piece of piety to part with one out of many for the service of the tabernacle; but when she had but one, and only one whom she loved, her Isaac, to present him to the Lord, was such an act of heroic piety as should by no means lose its reward. As when Abraham had offered Isaac, he received the promise of a numerous issue, *Gen. xxii. 16, 17.* to did Hannah, when she had presented Samuel unto the Lord, a living sacrifice. Note, What is lent to the Lord will certainly be repaid with interest, to our unspeakable advantage, and oftentimes in kind. Hannah resigns one child to God, and is recompensed with five, for Eli's blessing took effect, *ver. 21. she bare three sons and two daughters.* There is nothing lost by lending to God, or losing for him, it shall be repaid a hundred fold, *Matt. xix. 29.*

2. They returned to their own habitation, this is twice mentioned, *ver. 11.* and again, *ver. 20.* it was very pleasant to attend at God's house, to bless him, and to be blessed of him. But they have a family at home that must be looked after, and thither they return cheerfully, leaving the dear little one behind them, knowing they left him in a good place, and it doth not appear that he cried after them, but was as willing to stay as they were to leave him, so soon did he put away childish things, and carry it like a man.

3. They kept up their constant attendance at the house of God, with their yearly sacrifice, *ver. 19.* They did not think that their son's ministering there would excuse them, or that that offering must serve instead of other offerings, but having found the benefit of drawing near to God, they would omit no appointed season for it, and now they had one loadstone more in Shiloh to draw them thither: We may suppose they went thither to see their child oftener than once a year, for it was not ten miles from Ramah, but their annual visit is taken notice of, because then they brought their yearly sacrifice; and then Hannah fitted up her son (and some think oftener than once a year) with a new suit of cloaths, a little coat, *ver. 19.* and every thing belonging to it. She undertook to find him in clothes during his apprenticeship at the tabernacle, and took care he should be well provided, that he might appear the more decent and lightly in his ministrations, and to encourage him in his towardly beginnings. Parents must take care that their children want nothing that is fit for them, whether they are with them or from them; but those that are dutiful and hopeful, and minister to the Lord, must be thought worthy of double care and kindness.

4. The child Samuel did very well: Four several times he is mentioned in these verses; and two things we are told of:

(1.) The service he did to the Lord. He did well indeed, for he ministered to the Lord, *ver. 11—18.* according as his capacity, he learnt his catechism, and was constant to his devotions; soon learnt to read, and took a pleasure in the book of the law, and thus he ministered to the Lord. He ministered before Eli, *i. e.* under his inspection, and as he ordered him, not before Eli's sons; all parties were agreed that they were unfit to be his tutors. Perhaps, he attended immediately on Eli's person, was ready to him to fetch and bring as he had occasion, and that is called *ministering to the Lord.* Some little services perhaps he was employed in about the altar, though much under the age appointed by the law for the Levites ministrations: He could light a candle, or hold a dish, or run of an errand, or shut a door; and because he did this with a pious disposition of mind, it is called, *ministering to the Lord*, and great notice is taken of it. After a while he did his work so well, that Eli appointed he should minister with a linen ephod, as the priests did, though he was no priest, because he saw that God was with him. Note, Little children must learn betimes to minister to the Lord; Parents must train them up to it, and God will accept them; particularly, let them learn to pay respect to their teachers, as Samuel to Eli. None can begin too soon to be religious. See *Psal. viii. 2.* and *Matt. xxi. 15, 16.*

(2.) The blessing he received from the Lord. *He grew before the Lord* as a tender plant, *ver. 21. grew on, ver. 26.* in strength and stature, and especially in wisdom and understanding and fitness for business. Note, Those young people that serve God as well as they can, he will give them to improve, that they may serve him better. They that are planted in God's house shall flourish, *Psal. xcii. 13.* He was in favour with the Lord and with man. Note, It is a great encouragement to children to be tractable and virtuous and good betimes, that if they be, both God and man will love them. Such children are the darlings both of heaven and earth. What is here said of Samuel, is said of our blessed Saviour, that great example, *Luke ii. 52.*

Secondly, Let us now see how ill things went in Eli's family, though seated at the very door of the tabernacle. The nearer the church, the further from God.

1. The abominable wickedness of Eli's sons, *ver. 12. The sons of Eli were sons of Belial.* It is emphatically expressed: Nothing appears to the contrary, but that Eli himself was a very good man, and no doubt had educated his sons well, giving them good instructions, set them good examples, and put up many a good prayer for them, and yet when they grew up they proved sons of Belial, profane wicked men, and arrant rakes. They knew not the Lord: They could not but have a notional knowledge of God and his law, a form of knowledge, *Rom. ii. 20.* yet because their practice was not accordingly, they are spoken of as wholly ignorant of God; they lived as if they knew nothing at all of God. Note, Parents cannot give grace to their children, nor doth it run in a blood. Many that are sincerely pious

pious themselves, live to see those that come from them notoriously impious and profane, *for the race is not to the swift*. Eli was high-priest and judge in Israel, his sons were priests by their birth, their character was sacred and honourable, and obliged them for their reputation-sake to observe a decorum; they were resident at the fountain-head both of magistracy and ministry, and yet they were *sons of Belial*, and their honour, power and learning made them so much the worse. They did not go to *serve other gods*, as those did that lived at a distance from the altar, for from the house of God they had their wealth and dignity; but, which was worse, they managed the service of God as if he had been one of the dunghill deities of the heathen. It is hard to say which dishonours God more, idolatry or profaneness, especially the profaneness of the priests.

Let us see the wickedness of Eli's sons; and it is sad sight:

1. They profaned the offerings of the Lord, and make a gain themselves, or rather a gratification of their own luxury out of them. God had provided competently for them out of the sacrifices, *The offerings of the Lord made by fire* were a considerable branch of their revenue, but that did not please them, they served not the God of Israel but their own bellies, *Rom. xvi. 18.* such as the prophet calls *greedy dogs that can never have enough*, *Psal. lvi. 1.* (1.) They robbed the offerers, and seized for themselves some of their part of the sacrifice of the peace offerings. The priest had for his share the *wave-breast*, and the *heave-shoulder*, *Lev. viii. 34.* but that did not content, when the flesh was boiling for the offerer to feast upon religiously with his friends, they sent a servant with a flesh-hook of three teeth, a trident, and that must be struck into the pot, and whatever that brought up the priest must have, *ver. 13, 14.* and the people out of their great veneration suffered this to grow into a custom, so that after a while prescription was pleaded for this manifest wrong. (2.) They slept in before God himself, and encroached upon his right too, *as if it were a small thing to weary men, they wearied my God also*, *Isa. vii. 13.* Be it observed to the honour of Israel, that though the people tamely yielded to their unwarrantable demands from them, yet they were very solicitous that God should not be robbed, *Let them not fail to burn the fat presently*, *ver. 16.* Let the altar have its due, for that is the main matter, unless God have the fat, they can feast with little comfort upon the flesh; it was a shame that the priests should need to be thus admonished by the people of their duty: but they regarded not the admonition, the priest will be served first, and will take what he thinks fit of the fat too, for he is weary of boiled meat, he must have roast, and in order to that they must give it him raw; and if the offerer dispute it, though not in his own favour, let him take what he pleaseth of his part, but in favour of the altar, let them be sure to *burn the fat first*; even the priest's servants was grown so very imperious, that he would either have it now or take it by force: than which there could not be a greater affront to God, nor a greater abuse to the people. The effect was, (1.) That god was displeased, *The sin of the young men was very great before the Lord*, *ver. 17.* Nothing is more provoking to God than the profanation of sacred things, and men's serving their lusts with the offerings of the Lord. (2.) That religion suffered by it, *Men abhorred the offering of the Lord*. All good men abhorred their management of the offerings, and too many insensibly fell into a contempt of the offerings themselves for their sakes. It was the people's sin to think the worse of God's institutions, but it was the much greater sin of the priests that gave them occasion to do so. Nothings brings a greater reproach upon religion, than ministers covetousness, sensuality, and imperiousness. In the midst of this sad story comes in the repeated mention of Samuel's devotion, *but Samuel ministered before the Lord*, as an instance of the power of God's grace in preserving him pure and pious, in the midst of this wicked crew; and that helped to keep the sinking credit of the sanctuary in the minds of the people, who when they had said all they could against Eli's sons, could not but admire Samuel's seriousness, and speak well of religion for his sake.

2. They debauched the women that came to worship at the door of the tabernacle, *ver. 22.* they had wives of their own, but were like *sed horses*, *Jer. v. 8.* To have gone to the harlot's houses, the common prostitutes, had been abominable wickedness, but to use the interest which as priests they had in those women that had devout dispositions, and were religiously inclined, and to bring them to commit this wickedness, was such horrid impiety, as one can scarce think it possible men that called themselves priests should ever be guilty of. *Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and tremble, O earth!* No words can sufficiently express the villainy of such practices as these.

3. The reproof which Eli gave his sons for this wickedness of their's. *Eli was very old*, *ver. 22.* and could not himself inspect the service of the tabernacle as he had done, but left all to his sons, who, because of the infirmities of his age, slighted him, and did what they would; however he was told of the wickedness of his sons, and we may well imagine what a heart-breaking it was to him, and how much it added to the burdens of his age; but it should seem he did not so much as reprove them, till he heard of debauching the women, and then he thought fit to give them a check. Had he rebuked them for their greediness and luxury, this might have been prevented. Young people should be told of their faults, as soon as it is perceived they begin to be extravagant, lest their hearts be hardened. Now concerning the reproof he gave them, observe, 1. That it was very just and rational: That which he said was very well, (1.) He tells them that the matter of fact was too plain to be denied, and too public to be concealed, *I hear of your evil dealings by all this people*, *ver. 22.* It is not the surmise of one or two, but the avowed testimony of many, all your neighbours cry out shame on you, and bring their complaints to me, expecting that I should redress their grievance. (2.) He shews them the ill consequences of it, that they not only sinned, but made Israel to sin, and would have the people's sin to answer for as well as their own; you that should turn men from iniquity, *Mal. ii. 6.* *You make the Lord's people to transgress*, and corrupt the nation instead of reforming it; you tempt people to go serve other gods, when they see the God of Israel so ill served. (3.) He warns them of the danger they brought themselves into by it, *ver. 25.* he intimates to them what God afterwards told him, that the iniquity would not be purged with sacrifice nor offering, *chap. iii. 14.* *If one man sin against another*, the judge, *i. e.* the priest, who was appointed to be the judge in many cases, *Deut. xvii. 9.* *shall judge him*, shall undertake his cause arbitrate the matter, and make atonement for the offender, *but if a man sin against the Lord*, *i. e.* if a priest profane the holy things of the Lord, if a man that deals with God for others, do himself affront him, *who shall intreat for him?* Eli was himself a judge, and had oft made intercessions for transgressors, but saith he, you that *sin against the Lord*, *i. e.* against the law and honour of God, in those very things which immediately pertain to him, and by which reconciliation is to be made, how can I intreat for you? Their condition was deplorable indeed, when their own father could not speak a good word for them, nor could have the face to appear as their advocate. Sins against the remedy, the atonement itself, are most dangerous; *treading under foot the blood of the covenant*, for then there *remains no more sacrifice*, *Heb. x. 26.*

But (2.) It was too mild and gentle. He should have rebuked them sharply, their crimes deserved it, their temper needed it, the softness of his

dealing with them would but harden them the more. The animadversion was too easy when he said, *It is no good report*: He should have said, it is a shameful scandalous thing, and not to be suffered! Whether it was because he loved them, or because he feared them, that he dealt thus tenderly with them, it was certainly an evidence of the want of zeal for the honour of God and his sanctuary. He bound them over to God's judgment, but he should have taken cognizance of their crimes himself, as high-priest and judge, and have restrained and punished them. What he said was well, but it was not enough. Note, It is sometimes necessary that we put an edge upon the reproofs we give. There are those that must be *saved with fear*, *Jude 23.*

3. Their obstinacy against this reproof; his lenity did not at all work upon them, *they hearkened not to their father*, though he was also a judge, they had no regard either to his authority, or to his affection, which was to them an evident token of perdition, it was because the Lord would *slay them*. They had long hardened their hearts, and now God in a way of righteous judgment hardened their hearts, and seared their consciences, and withheld from them the grace they had resisted and forfeited. Note, Those that are deaf to the reproofs of wisdom, are manifestly marked for ruin. The Lord has determined to destroy them, *2 Chron. xxv. 16.* See *Prov. xxix. 1.* Immediately upon this, Samuel's tractableness is again mentioned, *ver. 26.* to shame their obstinacy; *the child Samuel grew*. God's grace is his own: he denied it to the sons of the high-priest, and gave it to the child of an obscure country Levite.

27. ¶ And there came a man of God unto Eli, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Did I plainly appear unto the house of thy father, when they were in Egypt in Pharaoh's house? 28. And did I choose him out of all the tribes of Israel to be my priest, to offer upon mine altar, to burn incense, to wear an ephod before me? and did I give unto the house of thy father all the offerings made by fire of the children of Israel? 29. Wherefore kick ye at my sacrifice, and at mine offering, which I have commanded in my habitation, and honourest thy sons above me, to make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings of Israel my people? 30. Wherefore the LORD God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father should walk before me for ever: but now the LORD saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed. 31. Behold, the days come that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. 32. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever. 33. And the man of thine, whom I shall not cut off from mine altar, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart: and all the increase of thine house shall die in the flower of their age. 34. And this shall be a sign unto thee, that shall come upon thy two sons, on Hophni and Phinehas: in one day they shall die both of them. 35. And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart, and in my mind: And I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before mine Anointed for ever. 36. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left in thine house, shall come and crouch to him for a piece of silver, and a morsel of bread, and shall say, Put me (I pray thee) into one of the priest's offices, that I may eat a piece of bread.

Eli reprov'd his sons too gently, and did not threaten them as he should, and therefore God sent a prophet to him to reprove him sharply, and to threaten him, because by his indulgence of them he had strengthened their hands in their wickedness. If good men be wanting in their duty, and by their carelessness and remissness contribute any thing to the sin of sinners, they must expect both to hear of it and smart for it. Eli's family was now nearer to God than all the families of the earth, and therefore he will punish them, *Amos iii. 2.* The message is sent to Eli himself, because God would bring him to repentance and save him; not to his sons whom he had determined to destroy. And it might have been a means of awakening him to do his duty at last, and so to have prevented the judgment, but we do not find it had any great effect upon him.

The message this prophet delivers from God is very close,

1. He minds him of the great things God had done for the house of his fathers, and for his family. He appeared to Aaron in Egypt, *Exod. iv. 27.* in the house of bondage, as a token of further favour he designed him, *ver. 27.* advanced him to the priesthood, entailed it upon his family, and thereby dignified it above any of the families of Israel; he intrusted him with honourable work, to offer on God's altar, to burn incense, and to wear that ephod in which was the breast-plate of judgment; he settled upon him an honourable maintenance; a share out of all the offerings made by fire, *ver. 28.* what could he have done more for them, to engage them to be faithful to him? Note, The distinguishing favours we have received from God, especially those of the spiritual priesthood, are great aggravations of sin, and will be remembered against us in the day of account, if we profane our crown, and betray our trusts, *Deut. xxxii. 6.* *2 Sam. xii. 7, 8.*

2. He exhibits a high charge against him and his family; his children did wickedly, and he connived at it, and thereby involved himself in the guilt; the indictment therefore runs against them all, *ver. 29.* (1.) His sons had impiously profaned the holy things of God: *Ye kick at my sacrifice which I have commanded*; not only trample upon the institution as a mean thing, but spurn at it as a thing you hate to be tied up to. They did the utmost despite imaginable to the offerings of the Lord, when they committed all that outrage and rapine about them that we read of, violently plundered the pots on which, in effect, *Holiness to the Lord* was written, *Zech. xiv. 20.* and took that fat to themselves which God had appointed to be

he burned on his altar. (2.) Eli had bolstered them up in it, by not punishing their insolence and impiety; thou for thy part *honourest thy sons above me*, i. e. thou hadst rather see my offerings disgraced by their profanation of them, than see thy sons disgraced by a legal censure upon them for so doing, which ought to have been inflicted, even to suspension and deprivation *ab officio & beneficio*. Those that allow and countenance their children in any evil way, and do not use their authority to restrain and punish them, do in effect *honour them more than God*, being more tender of their reputation than of his glory, and more desirous to humour them than to honour him. (3.) They had all shared in the gains of the sacrilege. It is to be feared, Eli himself, though he disliked and reproved the abuses they committed, yet did not forbear to eat of the roast meat they sacrilegiously got, *ver. 15*. he was a *fat lecherous man*, chap. iv. 18. and therefore it is charged upon the whole family; though Hophni and Phineas were principally guilty, *you make yourselves fat with the chiefest of all the offerings*. God gave them sufficient to feed them, but that would not suffice, they made themselves fat, and served their lusts with that which God was to be served with. See *I Hosea iv. 8*.

3. He declares the cutting off of the entail of the high priesthood from his family, *ver. 30*. *The Lord God of Israel*, who is jealous for his own honour and Israel's faith, and lets thee know it, that thy commission is revoked and superseded: *I find indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father Ithamar*, (for from that younger son of Aaron, Eli was descended) *should walk before me for ever*. Upon what occasion the dignity of the high priesthood was transferred from the family of Eleazar to that of Ithamar, doth not appear; but it seems it had been done, and Eli stood fair to have that honour perpetuated to his posterity; but observe, the promise carried its own condition along with it, *they shall walk before me for ever*, i. e. they shall have the honour, provided they faithfully do the service; *walking before God*, is the great condition of the covenant, *Gen. xvii. 1*. Let them set me before their face, and I will set them before my face continually, *Psal. xli. 12*. otherwise not. But now the Lord saith, *be it far from me*: Now you cast me off, you can expect no other but that I should cast you off: You will not walk before me as you should, and therefore you shall not; such wicked and abusive servants God will discard and turn out of his service. Some think there is a further reach in this re-call of the grant, and that it was not only to be fulfilled shortly in the deposing of the posterity of Eli, when Zadock, who descended from Eleazar, was put in Abiathar's room, but it was to have its complete accomplishment at length in the total abolishing of the Levitical priesthood by the priesthood of Christ.

4. He gives a good reason for this revocation, taken from a settled and standing rule of God's government, according to which all must expect to be dealt with, like that by which Cam was tried, *Gen. ix. 7*. *Them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed*. Observe in general, 1. That God is the fountain of honour and dishonour; he can exalt the meanest, and put contempt upon the greatest. 2. As we deal with God, we must expect to be dealt with by him, and yet more favourably than we deserve. See *Psal. xviii. 25, 26*. Particularly, be it spoken, (1.) To the everlasting reputation of religion and serious godliness, that it gives honour to God, and puts honour upon men. By it we seek and serve the glory of God, and he will be behind-hand with none that do so, but here and hereafter will secure their glory. The way to be truly great is to be truly good. If we humble and deny ourselves in any thing to honour God, and have a single eye to him in it, we may depend upon this promise, he will put the best honour upon us. See *John xii. 26*. (2.) Be it spoken to the everlasting reproach of impiety and profaneness, that it doth dishonour to God, despoileth the greatest and best of beings, whom angels adore; and it will bring dishonour upon men, for they that do so shall be lightly esteemed; not only God will lightly esteem them, (that perhaps they will not value, as they that honour him value his honour, of whom therefore it is said, *I will honour them*;) but they shall be lightly esteemed by all the world, the very honour they are proud of shall be laid in the dust; they shall see themselves despised by all mankind, their names a reproach; when they are gone, their memory shall rot, and when they rise again, it shall be to everlasting shame and contempt. The dishonour which their impotent malice puts upon God and his omnipotent justice, will return upon their own heads, *Psal. lxxix. 12*.

5. He foretells the particular judgments which should come upon his family, to the perpetual ignominy of it. A curse should be entailed upon his posterity, and a terrible curse it is, and shews how jealous God is in the matters of his worship, and how ill he takes it, when those, who are obliged by their character and profession to preserve and advance the interests of his glory, are false to their trust and betray them. If God's ministers be vicious and profane, *how much sorer punishment will they be thought worthy of*, here and for ever, than other sinners! Let such read the doom here passed on Eli's house, and tremble. It is threatened,

1. That their power should be broken, *ver. 31*. *I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house*; they shall be stripped of all their authority, should be deposed, and have no influence upon the people as they had had: *God would make them contemptible and base*. See *Mal. ii. 8, 9*. The sons had abused their power to oppress the people and encroach upon their rights, and the father had not used his power, as he ought to have done, to restrain and punish them, and therefore it is justly threatened, that the arm should be cut off, which was not stretched out as it should have been.

2. That their lives should be shortened: he was himself an old man; but instead of using the wisdom, gravity, experience and authority of his age, for the service of God, and the support of religion, he had suffered the infirmities of age to make him more cool and remiss in his duty, and therefore it is here threatened, that none of his posterity should live to be old, *ver. 31, 32*. it is twice spoken, *there shall not be an old man in thy house for ever*; and again, *ver. 33*. *all the increase of thine house*, from generation to generation, *shall die in the flower of their age*, when they are in the midst of the years of their service, so that though the family should not be extinct, yet it should never be considerable, nor should any of it come to be eminent in their day. Bishop Patrick relates it out of some of the Jewish writers, that long after this there being a family in Jerusalem, none of which commonly lived above eighteen years, upon search, it was found that they descended from the house of Eli, on which this sentence was passed.

3. That all their comforts should be embittered. (1.) The comfort they had in the sanctuary, and in the wealth and prosperity of that; *Thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation*. This was fulfilled in the Philistines' invasions, and the mischiefs they did to Israel, by which the country was impoverished, chap. xiii. 19. and, no doubt, the priests' incomes were thereby very much impaired. The captivity of the ark was such an act of hostility, committed upon God's habitation, as broke Eli's heart. As it is a blessing to a family to see peace upon Israel, *Psal. cxxviii. 5, 6*. so the contrary is a sore judgement upon a family, especially a family of priests. (2.) The comfort of their children. *The man of thine, whom I shall not cut off by an untimely death*, shall live to be a blot and burden to the family, a scandal and vexation to his relations, he shall be to *consume thine eyes*, and *grieve thine heart*, either for his foolishness, or his sickness, or his wickedness, or his poverty. Grief for a dead child is great, but for a bad child often greater.

4. That their substance should be wasted, and they should be reduced to extreme poverty, *ver. 36*. *He that is left alive in thy house*, shall have little joy of his life for want of a livelihood; he shall come and crouch to the succeeding family for a subsistence. (1.) He shall beg for the smallest alms, *a piece of silver*, and the word signifies the least piece, and *a morsel of bread*. See how this answered the sin: Eli's sons must have the best pieces of flesh, but their sons will be glad of *a morsel of bread*. Note, Want is the just punishment of wantonness. Those who could not be contented without dainties and varieties, are brought, they or theirs, to want necessities, and the Lord is righteous in it. (2.) He shall beg for the meanest office. *Put me into somewhat belonging to the priesthood*; as it is in the original, *make me as one of the hired servants*, the fittest place for a prodigal. Plenty and power are forfeited when they are abused. They should not be able to pretend to any good preferment, nor to any place at the altar, but should petition for some poor employment, be the work never so hard and the wages never so small, so they might but get bread. This, it is probable, was fully accomplished when Abiathar, who was of Eli's race, was deposed by Solomon for treason; and he and his turned out of office in the temple, *1 Kings ii. 26, 27*. by which it is easy to think his posterity were reduced to the extremities here described.

5. That God would shortly begin to execute these judgments in the death of Hophni and Phineas, the sad tidings of which Eli himself should live to hear, *this shall be a sign to thee*, *ver. 34*. when thou hearest it, say, Now the word of God begins to operate, here is one threatening fulfilled, from which I infer, that all the rest will be fulfilled in their order. Hophni and Phineas had many a time sinned together, and it is here foretold that they should die together both in one day. Bind these tares in a bundle for the fire. It was fulfilled, chap. iv. 11.

Lastly, In the midst of all these threatenings against the house of Eli, here is mercy promised to Israel, *ver. 35*. *I will raise me up a faithful priest*. (1.) This was fulfilled in Zadock, of the family of Eleazar, who came into Abiathar's place, in the beginning of Solomon's reign, and was faithful to his trust; and the high-priests were of his posterity as long as the Levitical priesthood continued. Note, The wickedness of ministers, though it destroy themselves, yet it shall not destroy the ministry. How bad soever the officers are, the office shall continue always to the end of the world. If some falsify their trust, yet others shall be raised up that will be true to it. God's work shall never fall to the ground for want of hands to carry it on. The high-priest is here said to *walk before God's anointed*, i. e. David and his seed, because he wore the breast-plate of judgment, which he was to consult, not in common cases, but for the king, in the affairs of state. Note, Notwithstanding the degeneracy we see and lament in many families, God will secure to himself a succession. If some grow worse than their ancestors, others to balance that shall grow better. (2.) It has its full accomplishment in the priesthood of Christ, that merciful and faithful high-priest, whom God raised up when the Levitical priesthood was thrown off, who in all things did his Father's mind, and for whom God will build a sure house, build it on a rock, so that the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.

C H A P. III.

In the foregoing chapter, we had Samuel a young priest, though by birth a Levite only, for he ministered before the Lord in a linen ephod; in this chapter we have him a young prophet, which was more; God in an extraordinary manner revealed himself to him, and in him reviving, if not commencing, prophecy in Israel. Here is, (1.) God's first manifestation of himself in an extraordinary manner to Samuel, *ver. 1—10*. (2.) The message he sent by him to Eli, *ver. 11—14*. (3.) The faithful delivery of that message to Eli, and his submission to the righteousness of God in it, *ver. 15—18*. (4.) The establishment of Samuel to be a prophet in Israel, *ver. 19—21*.

1. **A**ND the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli: and the word of the LORD was precious in those days; *there was no open vision*. 2. And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see: 3. And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep: 4. That the LORD called Samuel, and he answered, Here am I. 5. And he ran unto Eli, and said, Here am I, for thou calledst me. And he said, I called not; lie down again. And he went and lay down. 6. And the LORD called yet again, Samuel. And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, Here am I, for thou didst call me. And he answered, I called not, my son: lie down again. 7. Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him. 8. And the LORD called Samuel again the third time. And he arose, and went to Eli, and said, Here am I, for thou didst call me. And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. 9. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down, and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak LORD, for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10. And the LORD came, and stood and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel, answered, Speak, for thy servant heareth.

To make way for the account of God's revealing himself first to Samuel, we are here told, *ver. 1*. (1.) How industrious Samuel was in serving God, according as his place and capacity was, *ver. 1*. *The child Samuel*, though but a child, *ministered unto the Lord before Eli*. It was an aggravation of the wickedness of Eli's sons, that the child Samuel shamed them. They rebelled against the Lord, but Samuel ministered to him; they slighted their father's admonitions, but Samuel was observant of them, he ministered before Eli, under his eye and direction. It was the praise of Samuel, that he was so far from being influenced by their bad example, that he did not in the least fall off, but improve, and go on. And it was a preparative for the honours God intended him; he that was thus faithful in a little, was soon after intrusted with much more. Let those that are young be hum-

ble and diligent, and they will find that the surest way to preferment. Those are fittest to rule, that have learnt to obey. (2.) How scarce a thing prophecy then was, which made the call of Samuel to be the greater surprise to himself, and the greater favour to Israel. *The word of the Lord was precious in those days.* Now and then a man of God was employed as a messenger upon an extraordinary occasion, as *chap. ii. 27.* but there was no settled prophets, to whom the people might have recourse for counsel, nor from whom they might expect the discoveries of the divine will. And the rarity of prophecy made it the more precious, in the account of all those that knew how to put a right value upon it. It was precious, for what was (it seems) was private, *there was no open vision*, i. e. none that were publicly known to have visions. Perhaps, the impiety and impurity that prevailed in the tabernacle, and no doubt corrupted the whole nation, had provoked God, as a token of his displeasure, to withdraw the Spirit of prophecy; till the decree was gone forth for the raising up of a more faithful priest, and then as an earnest of that, this faithful prophet was raised up.

The manner of God's revealing himself to Samuel is here related very particularly, for it was uncommon.

1. Eli was retired; Samuel had waited on him to his bed, and the rest that attended the service of the sanctuary were gone, we may suppose, to their several apartments, *ver. 2.* *Eli was laid down in his place*, went to bed betimes, being unfit for business, and soon weary of it, and perhaps loving his ease too well. Probably, he kept his chamber much, which gave his sons the greater liberty. And he affected retirement the more, because his eyes began to wax dim, an affliction which came justly upon him for winking at his sons faults.

2. Samuel was laid down to sleep, in some closet near to Eli's room, as his page of the back-stairs, ready within call, if the old man should want any thing in the night, perhaps to read to him, if he could not sleep. He chose rather to take Samuel into this office than any of his own family, because of the towards disposition he observed in him. When his own sons were a grief to him, his little servitor was his joy. Let those that are afflicted in their children, thank God if they have any about them in whom they are comforted. *Samuel was laid down ere the lamp of God went out*, *ver. 3.* it should seem he lay somewhere so near the holy place, that he went to bed by that light, before any of the lamps in the branches of the candlestick went out (for the main lamp never went out) which probably was towards midnight; till that time Samuel had been employing himself in some good exercise or other, reading and prayer, or perhaps cleaning or making ready the holy place; and then went softly to his bed. Then we may expect God's gracious visits, when we are constant and diligent in our duty.

3. God called him by name, and he took it for Eli's call, and ran to him, *ver. 4, 5.* Samuel lay awake in his bed, his thoughts, no doubt, well employed, as David's, *Psal. lxxiii. 6.* When the Lord called to him, Bishop Patrick thinks, out of the most holy place, and so the Chaldee paraphrase reads it, *A voice was heard out of the temple of the Lord*; but Eli, though it is likely he lay nearer, heard it not; yet possibly it might come some other way. Hereupon we have an instance, 1. Of Samuel's industry and readiness to Eli; supposing it was he that called him, he hastened out of his warm bed, and ran to him, to see if he wanted any thing, and perhaps fearing he was not well. Here am I, faith he. A good example to servants, to come when they are called; and to the younger, not only to submit to the elder, but to be careful and tender of them. 2. Of his infirmity, and unacquaintedness with the visions of the Almighty, that he took that to be only Eli's call, which was really the call of God. Such mistakes as these we make oftener than we think of. God calls to us by his word, and we take it to be only the call of the minister, and answer it accordingly; calls to us by his providences, and we look only at the instruments. His voice cries, and it is but here and there a man of wisdom that understands it to be his voice. Eli assured him he did not call him, yet did not chide him for disturbing him with being over officious; did not call him a fool, and tell him he dreamed, but mildly bid him lie down again, he had nothing for him to do. If servants must be ready at their masters call, masters also must be tender of their servants comfort; that thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, may rest as well as thou. So Samuel went and lay down. God calls many by the ministry of the word, and they say, as Samuel did, Here am I; but not looking at God, nor discerning his voice in the call, the impressions of it are soon lost; they lie down again, and their convictions come to nothing.

4. The same call was repeated, and the same mistake made a second and third time, *ver. 6, 7, 8, 9.* (1.) God continued to call the child: *Yet again*, *ver. 6.* and *again the third time*, *ver. 8.* Note, The call which divine grace designs to make effectual, shall be repeated till it is so, that is, till we come at the call. For the purpose of God, according to which we are called, shall certainly stand. (2.) Samuel was still ignorant that it was the Lord that called him, *ver. 7.* *Samuel did not yet know the Lord.* He knew the written word, and was acquainted with the mind of God in that, but he did not yet apprehend the way in which God reveals himself to his servants the prophets, especially by a still small voice; this was altogether new and strange to him; perhaps he had been sooner aware of a divine revelation, had it come in a dream or a vision; but this was a way he had not only not known himself, but not heard of. Those that have the greatest knowledge of divine things, must remember the time when they were as babes, unskilful in the word of righteousness: *When I was a child I understood as a child.* Yet let us not despise the day of small things; *Thus did Samuel* (so the margin reads it) *before he knew the Lord, and before the word of the Lord was revealed unto him*; thus he blundered one time after another, but afterwards he understood himself better. The witness of the Spirit in the hearts of the faithful is often thus mistaken, by which means they lose the comfort of it; and the strivings of the Spirit with the consciences of sinners are likewise oft mistaken, and so the benefit of their convictions is lost: *God speaketh once, yea twice, but man perceiveth it not*, *Job xxxiii. 14.* (3.) Samuel went to Eli the second and third time, the voice perhaps resembling his, and the child being very ready to him; and he tells him with great assurance, *Thou didst call me*, *ver. 6, 8.* it could be no one else. Samuel's disposition to come when he was called, though but by Eli, speaking him dutiful and active, qualified him for the favour now to be shewed him; God chooseth to employ such. But there was a special providence in it, that he should go thus often to Eli, for hereby, at length, *Eli perceived that the Lord had called the child*, *ver. 8.* And, 1. This would be a mortification to him, and he would apprehend it a step towards his family's being degraded, that when God had something to say, he should choose to say it to the child Samuel, his servant that waited on him, and not to him. And it would humble him the more, when afterwards he found it was a message to himself, and yet sent him by a child. He had reason to look upon this as a further token of God's displeasure. 2. This would put him upon enquiring what it was that God said to Samuel, and would abundantly satisfy him of the truth and certainty of what should be delivered, and no room would be left for him to suggest, that it was but a fancy of Samuel's, for be-

fore the message was delivered, he himself perceived that God was about to speak to him, and yet must not know what it is, till he had it from Samuel himself. Thus even the infirmities and mistakes of those whom God employs, are over-ruled by infinite Wisdom, and made serviceable to his purposes.

5. At length Samuel was put into a posture to receive a message from God, not to be lodged with himself and go no further; but that he might be a complete prophet, to be published and made an open vision. (1.) Eli perceiving that it was the voice of God that Samuel heard, gave him instructions what to say, *ver. 9.* This was honestly done; that though it was a disgrace to him for God's call to pass him by, and he directed to Samuel, yet he put him in a way how to entertain it. Had he been envious of this honour done to Samuel, he would have done what he could to baulk him of it, and since he did not perceive it himself, would have bid him lie down and sleep and never heed it, it was but a dream; but he was of a better spirit than so; gave him the best advice he could for the forwarding of his advancement: Thus the elder should without grudging, do their utmost to assist and improve the younger that are rising up, though they see themselves likely to be darkened and eclipsed by them. Let us never be wanting to inform and instruct those that are coming after us, even such as will soon be preferred before us, *Job i. 30.* The instruction Eli gave him was, when God called the next time, to say, *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.* He must call himself God's servant, must desire to know the mind of God. *Speak, Lord, speak to me, speak now*; and he must prepare to hear, and promise to attend, *thy servant heareth.* Note, Then we may expect that God will speak to us, when we set ourselves to hearken to what he saith, *Psal. lxxxv. 8.* *Hab. ii. 1.* When we come to read the word of God, and to attend on the preaching of it, we should come thus disposed, submitting our souls to the commanding light and power of it; *Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.* (2.) It should seem, that God spake the fourth time, in a way somewhat different from the other; though the call was as at other times, a call to him by name, yet now he stood and called; which intimates, that there was now some visible appearance of the divine glory to Samuel, a vision that stood before him, like that before Eli-phaz, though he could not discern the form thereof, *Job iv. 16.* This satisfied him that it was not Eli that called, for he now saw the voice that spake with him, as it is expressed, *Rev. i. 12.* Now also the call was doubled, Samuel. Samuel, as if God delighted in the mention of his name; or to intimate, that now he should be made to understand who spake to him. *God hath spoken once, twice have I heard this*, *Psal. lxvii. 11.* It was an honour to him, that God was pleased to know him by name, *Exod. xxxiii. 12.* and then his call was powerful and effectual, when he called him by name, and so brought it particularly to him, as Saul, Saul. Thus God called to Abraham by name, *Gen. xxii. 1.* (3.) Samuel said as he was taught, *Speak, for thy servant heareth.* Note, Good words should be put into children's mouths betimes, and apt expressions of pious and devout affections, by which they may be prepared for a better acquaintance with divine things, and trained up to a holy converse with them. Teach young people what they shall say, for they cannot order their speech by reason of darkness. Samuel did not now rise and run as before, when he thought Eli called, but lay still and listened. The more sedate and composed our spirits are, the better they are prepared for divine discoveries. Let all tumultuous thoughts and passions be kept under, and every thing be quiet and serene in the soul, and then we are fit to hear from God. All must be silent when he speaks. But observe, Samuel left out one word, he did not say, *Speak, Lord*, but only *Speak for thy servant heareth*, perhaps, as Bishop Patrick suggests, out of uncertainty, whether it were God that spake to him or no. However, by this answer, *Speak, for thy servant heareth*, way was made for the message he was now to receive, and Samuel was brought acquainted with the words of God, and visions of the Almighty. And this, ere the lamp of God went out, *ver. 3.* in the temple of the Lord, which some of the Jewish writers put a mystical sense upon; before the fall of Eli, and the eclipsing of the Urim and Thummim for some time, thereby, God called Samuel, and made him an oracle; whence they have an observation among their doctors, *That the sun riseth, and the sun goeth down*, *Ecc. 5.* that is, say they, ere God maketh the sun of one righteous man to set, he makes the sun of another righteous man to rise. *Smith ex Kimchi.*

11. ¶ And the LORD said to Samuel, Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. 12. In that day, I will perform against Eli, all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin, I will also make an end. 13. For I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth: because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. 14. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever. 15. ¶ And Samuel lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the LORD; and Samuel feared to shew Eli the vision. 16. Then Eli called Samuel, and said, Samuel my son, And he answered, Here am I, 17. And he said, What is the thing that the LORD hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me: God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me, of all the things that he said unto thee. And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the LORD: let him do what seemeth him good.

Here is, 1. The message, which after all this introduction God delivered to Samuel concerning Eli's house. God did not come to him now, to tell him how great a man he should be in his day, what a figure he should make, and what a blessing he should be in Israel. Young people have commonly a great curiosity to be told their fortune, but God came to Samuel, not to gratify his curiosity, but to employ him in his service, and send him of an errand to another person, which was much better; and yet the matter of this first message, which no doubt made a very great impression upon him, might be of good use to him afterwards, when his own sons prove, though not so bad as Eli's, yet not so good as they should have been, *chap. viii. 3.*

The message is short, not near so long as that which the man of God brought, *chap. ii. 27.* for Samuel being a child, it could not be expected he should remember a long message, and God considered his frame. The memories of children must not be overcharged, no not with divine things.

But

But it is a sad message, a message of wrath, to ratify the message in the former chapter, and to bind on the sentence there pronounced, because perhaps Eli did not give so much regard to that as he ought to have done. Divine threatenings, the less they are heeded; the surer they will come, and the heavier they will fall. Reference is here had to what was there said both concerning the sin, and concerning the punishment.

1. Concerning the sin, it is the *iniquity that he knoweth*, ver. 13. The man of God told him of it, and many a time his own conscience had told him of it. O what a great deal of guilt and corruption is there in us, concerning which we may say, it is the *iniquity which our own heart knoweth*; we are conscious to ourselves of it! In short, the iniquity was this, *his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not*. Or, as it is in the Hebrew, *he frowned not upon them*. If he did shew his dislike of their wicked courses, yet not to that degree that he ought to have done: he did reprove them, but he did not punish them for the mischief they did, nor deprive them of their power to do mischief, which as a father, high-priest, and judge, he might have done. Note, 1. Sinners do by their own wickedness make themselves vile. They debauch themselves, for *every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lusts*, James i. 14. and thereby they debase themselves, and make themselves not only mean, but odious to the holy God and holy men and angels. Sin is a vile thing, and vilifies men more than any thing, *Psal. xv. 4*. Eli's sons made light of God, and made his offerings vile in the peoples eyes, but the shame returned into their own bosom, *they made themselves vile*. 2. Those that do not restrain the sins of others, when it is in the power of their hand to do it, make themselves partakers of the guilt, and will be charged as accessaries. Those in authority will have a great deal to answer for, if they make not the sword they bear, a terror to evil workers.

2. Concerning the punishment, it is *that which I have spoken concerning his house*, ver. 12. and ver. 13. *I have told him, that I will judge his house for ever*, i. e. that a curse should be entailed upon his family from generation to generation. The particulars of this curse we had before, they are not here repeated, but it is added,

1. That when that sentence began to be executed, it would be very dreadful and amazing to all Israel, *ver. 11. Both the ears of every one that hears it shall tingle*. Every Israelite would be struck with terror and astonishment, to hear of slaying of Eli's sons, the breaking of Eli's neck, and the dispersion of Eli's family. Lord, How terrible art thou in thy judgments! If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? Note, God's judgments upon others, should affect us with a holy fear, *Psal. cxix. 120*.

2. That the dreadful first-fruits of the execution, would be certain earnest of the progress and full accomplishment of it. *When I begin, I will proceed and make an end of all I have threatened*, ver. 12. It is intimated, that it might possibly be some time before he would begin, but let them not call that forbearance an acquittance, nor that reprieve a pardon, for when at length he doth begin, he will make thorough work of it; and though he stay long, he will strike home.

3. That no room should be left for hope that this sentence might be reversed, and the execution staid or mitigated, *ver. 14*. 1. God would not revoke the sentence, for he backed it with an oath: *I have sworn to the house of Eli*; and God will not go back from what he has sworn, either in mercy or judgment. 2. He would never come to a composition for the forfeiture. *The iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever*. No atonement shall be made for the sin, nor any abatement of the punishment. This was the imperfection of the legal sacrifices, that there were iniquities which they did not reach, which they would not purge; but *the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin*, and secures all those that by faith are interested in it, from that eternal death, which is the wages of sin.

2. The delivery of this message to Eli. Observe,

1. Samuel's modest concealment of it, *ver. 15*. (1.) *He lay till the morning*, and we may well suppose he lay awake, pondering on what he had heard, repeating it to himself, and considering what use he must make of it. After we have received the spiritual food of God's word, it is good to compose ourselves and give it time to digest. (2.) *He opened the doors of the house of the Lord*, in the morning as he used to do, being up first in the tabernacle. That he should do so at other times, was an instance of an extraordinary towardliness in a child, but that he should do so this morning, was an instance of great humility. God had highly honoured him above all the children of his people, yet he was not proud of the honour, nor puffed up with it; did not think himself too great, and too good to be employed in these mean and servile offices, but as cheerfully as ever, went and opened the doors of the tabernacle. Note, Those whom God manifests himself to he makes and keeps low in their own eyes and willing to stoop to any thing by which they may be serviceable to his glory, though but as door-keepers in his house. One would have expected, that Samuel should have been so full of his vision, as to forget his ordinary service; that he should have gone among his companions, as one in an ecstasy, to tell them what converse he had had with God this night; but he modestly keeps it to himself, tells the vision to no man, but silently goes on in his business. Our secret communion with God is not to be proclaimed upon the house-tops. (3.) *He feared to shew Eli the vision*. If he were afraid Eli would be angry with him, and chide him, it will give us cause to suspect, that Eli used to be severe with this towardly child, as he was indulgent to his own wicked sons, and that will bear hard upon him. But we will suppose, it was rather, because he was afraid to grieve and trouble the good old man, that he was so shy. If he had run presently with the tidings to Eli, it would have looked, as if he desired the woful day, and hoped to build his own family upon the ruin of Eli's, therefore it became him not to be forward to do it; no good man can take pleasure in bringing evil tidings, especially not Samuel to Eli, the pupil to the tutor whom he loves and honours.

2. Eli's careful enquiry into it, *ver. 16, 17*. as soon as ever he heard Samuel stirring, he called for him, probably, to his bed-side; and having perceived before that God had spoken to him, he obliged him not only by importunity, *I pray thee hide it not from me*, but finding him timorous and backward, by an adjuration likewise, *God do so to thee and more also, if thou hide any thing from me*: he had reason enough to fear that the message prophesied no good concerning him, but evil; and yet, because it was a message from God, he could not contentedly be ignorant of it. A good man desires to be acquainted with all the will of God, whether it make for him or against him. His adjuration, *God do so to thee, if thou hide any thing from me*, may intimate the fearful doom of unfaithful watchmen; if they warn not sinners, they bring upon themselves that wrath and curse, which they should have denounced, in God's name, against those that go on still in their trespasses.

3. Samuel's faithful delivery of his message at last, *ver. 18*. *He told him every whit*: when he saw he must tell him, he never minced the matter, nor offered to make it better than it was, to nullify that which was sharp, or to gild the bitter pill; but delivered the message as plainly and fully as he received it, *not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God*. Christ's ministers must deal thus faithfully.

4. Eli's pious acquiescence in it: he did not question Samuel's integrity, was not cross with him, nor had he any thing to object against the equity of the sentence; he did not complain of the punishment, as Cain did, that it was greater than either he deserved or could bear, but patiently submitted and accepted the punishment of his iniquity. *It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good*. He understood the sentence to intend only a temporal punishment, and the entail of disgrace and poverty upon his posterity, and not a final separation of them from the favour of God, and therefore he cheerfully submitted; did not repine, because he knew the ill merits of his family; nor did he now intercede for the reversing of the sentence, because God had ratified it with a solemn oath of which he could not repent; he therefore composed himself into a humble resignation to God's will, as Aaron, in a case not much unlike, *Lev. x. 3. He held his peace*. In a few words, 1. He lays down this satisfying truth, *It is the Lord*; it is he that pronounces the judgment, from whose bar there lies no appeal, and against whose sentence there lies no exception. It is he that will execute the judgment, whose power cannot be resisted, his justice arraigned, nor his sovereignty contested. *It is the Lord*, who will thus sanctify and glorify himself, and it is highly fit he should. *It is the Lord*, with whom there is no unrighteousness, who never did nor ever will do any wrong to any of his creatures, nor exact more than their iniquity deserves. 2. He infers from it this satisfying conclusion, *Let him do what seemeth him good*; I have nothing to say against his proceedings, he is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, and therefore *his will be done*. *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him*. Thus we ought to quiet ourselves under God's rebukes, and never to strive with our maker.

19. ¶ And Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. 20. And all Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD. 21. And the LORD appeared again in Shiloh: for the LORD revealed himself to Samuel in Shiloh, by the word of the LORD.

Samuel being thus brought acquainted with the visions of God, we have here an account of the further honour done him as a prophet.

1. God did him honour. Having begun to favour him, he carried on and crowned his own work in him, *ver. 19. Samuel grew, for the Lord was with him*. All our increase in wisdom and grace is owing to the presence of God with us; it is all in all to our growth. God honoured Samuel, (1.) By further manifestations of himself to him. Samuel had faithfully delivered the messages he was intrusted with, and therefore God employed him again in his service, *ver. 21. The Lord revealed himself again to Samuel in Shiloh*. Note, God will graciously repeat his visits to those that receive them aright. (2.) By fulfilling what he spake by him, *ver. 19. God did let none of his words fall to the ground*; whatever Samuel said, as a prophet, it proved true and accomplished in its season. Probably, there were some remarkable instances of the truth of Samuel's predictions that happened presently, which confirmed those that were afterwards to be fulfilled, and gave general satisfaction of his mission. God will confirm the word of his servants, and perform the counsel of his messengers, *Isa. xlv. 26*. and will do what he hath said.

2. Israel did him honour. They all knew, and owned, *that Samuel was established to be a prophet*, *ver. 20*. (1.) He grew famous; all that came up to Shiloh to worship took notice of him, and admired him, and talked of him when they went home. Early piety will be the greatest honour of young people, and bring them, as much as any thing, and as soon into reputation. Them that honour God he will honour. (2.) He grew useful, and very serviceable to his generation. He that began betimes to be good, soon came to do good. His established commission from God, and established reputation with the people, gave him a great opportunity of shining as a light in Israel. When old Eli was rejected, young Samuel was established; for God will never leave himself without witness, nor his Church without a guide.

C H A P. IV.

The predictions in the foregoing chapters, concerning the ruin of Eli's house, here begin to be fulfilled; just how long after doth not appear; but it was not long. Such sinners God often makes quick work with. Here is, (1.) The disgrace and loss Israel sustained in a rencounter with the Philistines, *ver. 1, 2*. (2.) Their foolish project to fortify themselves, by bringing the ark of God into their camp upon the shoulders of Hophni and Phinehas, *ver. 3, 4. which made them secure*, *ver. 5. and struck a fear into the Philistines, but such a fear as animated them*, *ver. 6—9*. (3.) The fatal consequences of it: *Israel was beaten, and the ark taken prisoner*, *ver. 10, 11*. (4.) The tidings of this brought to Shiloh, and the sad reception of those tidings. 1. The city was put into confusion, *ver. 12, 13*. 2. Eli fainted away, fell and broke his neck, *ver. 14—18*. 3. His daughter-in-law fell in labour upon it, bore a son, but died presently, *ver. 19—22*. These were the things which would make the ears of those that heard them to tingle.

1. **A**ND the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Eben-ezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek. 2. And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men. 3. ¶ And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies. 4. So the people sent to Shiloh, that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubims: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there, with the ark of the covenant

venant of God. 5. And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp, all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again. 6. And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout, they said, What *meaneth* the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp. 7. And the Philistines were afraid, for they said, God is come into the camp. And they said, Wo unto us; for there hath not been such a thing heretofore. 8. Wo unto us: Who shall deliver us out of the hand of these mighty Gods? these *are* the Gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness. 9. Be strong and quit yourselves like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men, and fight.

The first words which relate to Samuel, that his word came to all Israel, seem not to have any reference to the following story, as if it were by any direction of his, that the Israelites went out against the Philistines: had they consulted him, though but newly initiated as a prophet, it might have stood them in more stead than the ark did; but perhaps the princes of Israel despised his youth, and would not have recourse to him as an oracle, and he did not as yet interpose in public affairs; nor do we find any mention of his name from henceforward, till some years after, chap. vii. 3. only *his word came to all Israel*, i. e. people from all parts, that were piously disposed, had recourse to him as a prophet, and advised with him. Perhaps, it is meant of his prophecy against the house of Eli, that was generally known and talked of, and all that were serious and observing compared the events here related, when they came to pass, with that prophecy, and saw it accomplished in them.

Here is, 1. A war entered into with the Philistines, ver. 1. It was an attempt to throw off the yoke of their oppression, and would have sped better, if they had first repented and reformed, and so begun their work at the right end. It is computed, that this was about the middle of the forty years dominion that the Philistines had over Israel, *Judg.* xiii. 1. and soon after the death of Samson, so Bishop Patrick, who thinks, the slaughter he made at his death, might encourage this attempt: but Dr. Lightfoot reckons it forty years after Samson's death, for so long Eli judged, ver. 13.

2. The defeat of Israel in that war, ver. 2. Israel, who were the aggressors, was smitten, and had four thousand men killed upon the spot. God had promised that one of them should chase a thousand, but now quite contrary, *Israel is smitten before the Philistines*. Sin, the accursed thing, was in the camp, and gave their enemies all the advantage against them they could wish for.

3. The measures they concerted for another engagement; a council of war was called, and instead of resolving to fast and pray and amend their lives, so ill taught were they, and no wonder, when they had such teachers, that, (1.) They quarreled with God for appearing against them, ver. 2. *Wherefore has the Lord smitten us?* If they meant this as an enquiry into the cause of God's displeasure, they needed not go far to find that out; it was plain enough, Israel had sinned, though they were not willing to see it and own it; but it rather seems, that they expostulate boldly with God about it, are displeased with what God had done, and dispute it with him. They own the hand of God in their trouble, so far was right; it is the Lord that has smitten us; but instead of submitting to it, they quarrel with it, and speak as those that were angry at him and his providence, and not aware of any just provocation they had given him. Wherefore shall we, that are Israelites, be smitten before the Philistines? How absurd and unjust is it! Note, The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord, Prov. xix. 3. and finds fault with him. (2.) They imagined they could oblige him to appear for them the next time, by bringing the ark into their camp. The elders of Israel were so ignorant and foolish, as to propose it, ver. 3. and the people soon put it in execution, ver. 4. they sent to Shiloh for the ark, and Eli had not courage enough to oppose it, but sent his ungodly sons, Hophni and Phinehas, along with it, at least permitted them to go, though he knew that wherever they went, the curse of God went along with them. Now see here, 1. The mighty veneration they had for the ark. O send for that, and that will do wonders for us. The ark was, by institution, a visible token of God's presence. God had said that he would dwell between the cherubims which were over the ark, and were carried along with it; now they thought, that by paying a great respect to this sacred chest they should prove themselves to be Israelites indeed, and effectually engage God Almighty to appear in their favour. Note, It is common for those that have estranged themselves from the vitals of religion, to discover a great fondness for the rituals, and external observance of it; for those that even deny the power of godliness, not only to have, but to have in admiration, the form of it. The temple of the Lord is cried up, and the ark of the Lord stickled for, with a great deal of seeming zeal by multitudes, that have no regard at all for the Lord of the temple, and the God of the ark; as if a fiery concern for the name of Christianity, would atone for a profane contempt of the thing. And yet indeed they did but make an idol of the ark, and looked upon it to be as much an image of the God of Israel, as those which the heathen worshipped were of their gods. To worship the true God, and not to worship him as God, is in effect not to worship him at all. (2.) Their egregious folly in thinking that if they had that in their camp, it would certainly *save them out of the hand of their enemies*, and bring victory back to their side. For, 1. When the ark set forward, Moses prayed, *Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered*, well knowing, that it was not the ark moving with them, but God appearing for them that must give them success; and here were no proper means used to engage God to favour them with his presence, what good then would the ark do them? the shell without the kernel? 2. They were so far from having God's leave to remove his ark, that he had plainly enough intimated to them in his law, that when they were settled in Canaan, his ark should be settled in the place that he should choose, *Deut.* xxii. 5. 11. and that they must come to it, and not it to them. How then could they expect any advantage by it, when they had not a just and legal possession of it? nor any warrant to stir it from its place? Instead of honouring God by what they did, they really affronted him. Nay, 3. If there had been nothing else to invalidate their expectations from the ark, how could they expect it should bring a blessing, when Hophni and Phinehas were the men that brought it. It would have

given too much countenance to their villainy, if the ark had done any kindness to Israel, while it was in the hands of those graceless priests.

4. The great joy that was in the camp of Israel, when the ark was brought into it, ver. 5. *they shouted so that the earth rang again*. Now they thought themselves sure of victory, and therefore gave a triumphant shout before the battle, as if the day were without fail their own, intending, by this mighty shout, to animate themselves and their own forces, and to intimidate their adversaries. Note, Carnal people triumph much in the external privileges and performances of religion, and build much upon them, as if those would infallibly save them; and as if the ark, God's throne, in the camp, would bring them to heaven, though the world and the flesh be upon the throne in the heart.

5. The consternation which the bringing the ark into the camp of Israel put the Philistines into. The two armies lay so near encamped, that the Philistines heard the shout the Israelites gave on this great occasion, soon understood what it was they triumphed in, ver. 6. and they were afraid of the consequences. For, (1.) It had never been before in their days. *God is come into their camp*, and therefore *wo unto us*, ver. 7. and again, *wo unto us*, ver. 8. The name of the God of Israel was formidable even to those that worshipped other gods, and some apprehensions, even the infidels had, of the danger of contending with him. Natural conscience suggests this, that those are in a woful condition who have God against them? yet see what great notions they had of the divine presence, as if the God of Israel were not as much in the camp before the ark came thither; which may very well be excused in them, since the notions of the Israelites themselves had of that presence were no better. O, say they, this is a new design upon us, more frightful than all their stratagems, for *there has not been such a thing heretofore*; this was the most effectual course they could take to dispirit our men, and weaken their hands. (2.) When it had been done in the days of old, it had wrought wonders, ver. 8. *Those are the gods that smote the Egyptians with all the plagues in the wilderness*. Here they were as much out in their history as in their divinity; the plagues of Egypt were inflicted before the ark was made, and before Israel came into the wilderness; but some confused traditions they had of wonders wrought by or for Israel, when this ark was carried before them, which they attributed not to Jehovah, but to the ark. Now, say they, *Who shall deliver us out of the hands of these mighty Gods?* taking the ark for God, as well they might, when the Israelites themselves idolized it. Yet it should seem they scarce believed themselves, when they spoke thus formidably of these mighty gods, but only bantered; for, instead of retreating or proposing conditions of peace, which they would have done, had they been really convinced of the power of Israel's God, they stirred up one another to fight so much the more stoutly: this surprising difficulty did but sharpen their resolution, ver. 9. *Be strong and quit yourselves like men*; the commanders inspiring bold and generous thoughts into the minds of their soldiers, when they bid him remember how they had lorded it over Israel, and what an intolerable grief and shame it would be if they sneaked now, and suffered Israel to lord it over them.

10. ¶ And the Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent: and there was a very great slaughter; and there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. 11. And the ark of God was taken; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas were slain.

Here is a short account of the issue of this battle.

1. Israel was smitten, the army dispersed, and totally routed, not retiring into their camp, as before, ver. 2. when they hoped to rally again, but returning to their tents, every man shifting for his own safety, and making the best of his way home, despairing to make head any more: and thirty thousand were slain in the field of battle, ver. 10. Israel was put to the worse. (1.) Though they had the better cause, were the people of God, and the Philistines were uncircumcised; they stood up in necessary defence of their just rights and liberties against invaders, and yet they failed of success, for *their rock had sold them*. A good cause often suffers for the sake of the bad men that undertake it. (2.) Though they had the greater confidence, and a better heart on it. They shouted while the Philistines trembled, and yet, when God pleaded so to order it, the Philistines' terrors were turned into triumphs, and Israel's shouts into lamentations. (3.) Though they had the ark of God with them. External privileges will secure none that abuse them, and do not live up to them. The ark in the camp will add nothing to its strength, when there is an Achan in it.

2. The ark itself was taken by the Philistines and Hophni and Phinehas, who, it is likely, stuck close to it, and when it was in danger, ventured far in the defence of it, because by it they got their living, were *both slain*, ver. 11. To this sad event the Psalmist refers, *Psal.* lxxviii. 61, 64. *He delivered his strength into captivity and his glory into the enemies hand. Their priests fell by the sword.* 1. The slaughter of the priests, considering their ill character, was no great loss to Israel, but it was a dreadful judgment upon the house of Eli. The word which God had spoken was fulfilled in it, chap. ii. 3, 4. *This shall be a sign unto thee, an earnest of the judgments threatened. Thy two sons shall die both in one day, and so shall all the increase of thy house die in the flower of their age*, ver. 33. If Eli had done his duty, and put them, as polluted, from the priesthood, (*Neh.* vii. 64.) they might have lived, though in disgrace; but now God takes the work into his own hands, and chafers them out of the world by the sword of the uncircumcised. *The Lord is known by those judgments which he executeth*. It is true, the sword devours one as well as another, but these were waited for of the sword, marked for vengeance. They were out of their place, what had they to do in the camp? When men leave the way of their duty, they put themselves out of God's protection. But this was not all; they had betrayed the ark, by bringing it into danger, without a warrant from God, and this filled the measure of their iniquities. But, 2. The taking of the ark was a very great judgment upon Israel, and a certain token of God's hot displeasure against them. Now they are made to see their folly in trusting to their external privileges, when they had by their wickedness forfeited them; and fancying that the ark would save them, when God was departed from them. Now they are made to reflect, with the utmost regret, upon their own rashness and presumption, in bringing the ark into the camp, and exposing it; and with a thousand times they had left it where God had fixed it. Now they are convinced, that God will not be preferred to by vain and foolish men, and that though he has bound us to his ark, he has not bound himself to it, but will rather deliver it into the hands of his sworn enemies, than suffer it to be profaned by his false friends, and countenance their superstition. Let none think to shelter themselves from the wrath of God under the cloak of a visible profession, for there will be those cast into utter darkness, that have eaten and drunk in Christ's presence.

12. ¶ And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head. 13. And when he came, lo, Eli sat upon a seat by the way-side, watching; for his heart trembled for the ark of God. And when the man came into the city and told it, all the city cried out. 14. And when Eli heard the noise of the crying, he said, What *meaneth* the noise of this tumult? And the man came in hastily, and told Eli. 15. Now Eli was ninety and eight years old, and his eyes were dim, that he could not see. 16. And the man said unto Eli, I *am* he that came out of the army, and I fled to-day out of the army. And he said, what is there done, my son? 17. And the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phineas are dead, and the ark of God is taken. 18. And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died: for he was an old man and heavy. And he had judged Israel forty years.

Tidings are here brought to Shiloh of the fatal issue of their battle with the Philistines. Ill news flies fast. This soon spread through all Israel, every man that fled to his tent, brought it with too plain a proof of it to his neighbours: but no place was so nearly concerned as Shiloh, thither therefore an express posted away immediately; it was a man of Benjamin, the Jews fancy it was Saul; *he rent his clothes and put earth upon his head*; by these signs to proclaim to all that saw him as he ran, the sorrowful news, and to shew how much himself was affected with it, *ver. 12.* He went straight to Shiloh with it; and here we are told,

1. How the city rent it. *Eli sat in the gate, ver. 13—15.* but the messenger was loth to tell him first, and therefore passed him by, and told it in the city, with all the aggravating circumstances, and now both the ears of every one that heard it tingled, it was foretold, *chap. ii. 11.* their hearts trembled, and every face gathered blackness: *All the city cried out, ver. 13.* and well they might, for besides that this was a calamity to all Israel, it was a particular loss to Shiloh, and the ruin of that place: For though the ark was soon rescued out of the hands of the Philistines, yet it never returned to Shiloh again; their candlestick was removed out of its place; because they had *left their first love*, and their city dwindled and sunk and came to nothing. Now God *forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh*, they having driven him from them, and the tribe of Ephraim which had for three hundred and forty years been blessed with the presence of the ark in it, lost the honour, *Psal. xxviii. 60—67.* and some time after it was transferred to the tribe of Judah, *the mount Sion, which he loved*, as it follows there, *ver. 68.* because the men of Shiloh knew not the day of their visitation. This abandoning of Shiloh Jerusalem is long after minded of, and bid to take warning by, *Jer. vii. 12. Go see what I did to Shiloh.* From this day, this fatal day, let the desolations of Shiloh be dated; they had therefore reason enough to cry out, when they heard that the ark was taken.

2. What a fatal blow it was to old Eli. Let us see,

1. With what fear he expected the tidings. Though old, and blind, and heavy, yet he could not keep his chamber, when he was sensible the glory of Israel lay at stake, but placed himself by the way-side, to receive the first intelligence; for *his heart trembled for the ark of God, ver. 12.* His careful thoughts represented to him what a dishonour it will be to God, and what an irreparable loss to Israel, if the ark fall into the Philistines hands: with what profane triumphs it will be told in Gath, and published in the streets of Ashkelon: He also apprehends what imminent danger there was of it; Israel had forfeited the ark, his own sons especially, the Philistines would aim at it; and now the threatening comes to his mind, that he should *see an enemy in God's habitation, chap. ii. 32.* and perhaps, his own heart reproached him for not using his authority, to prevent the carrying of the ark into the camp; all these things made him tremble. Note, All good men lay the interest of God's church nearer their hearts, than any secular interest or concern of their own, and cannot but be in pain and fear for them, if at any time they be in peril. How can we be easy if the ark be not safe?

2. With what grief he received the tidings. Though he could not see, he could hear the tumult and crying of the city, and perceived it to be the voice of lamentation and mourning and woe; like a careful magistrate, he asks, *What means the noise of this tumult?* *ver. 14.* is told, there is an express come from the army, who relates the story to him very distinctly, and with great assurance, having himself been an high witness of it, *ver. 16, 17.* the account of the defeat of the army, and the slaughter of a great number of the soldiers, was very grievous to him as a judge; the tidings of the death of his two sons, of whom he had been so indulgent, and whom he had reason to fear died impenitent, touched him in a tender part as a father; yet it was not for these that his heart trembled, there is a greater concern upon his spirit which swallows up the lesser; he doth not interrupt the narrative with any passionate lamentations for his sons, like David for Absalom, but waits for the end of the story, not doubting but that the messenger, being an Israelite, would, without being asked, say something of the ark: and if he could but have said, Yet the ark of God is safe, and we are bringing that home; his joy for that would have overcome his grief for all the other disasters, and have made him easy; but when the messenger concludes his story with that, *the ark of God is taken*, he is struck to the heart, his spirits fail, and it should seem, he swooned away, fell off his seat, and partly with the fainting, and partly with the fall, he died immediately, and never spoke word more. His heart was broke first, and then his neck. So fell the high-priest and judge of Israel, so fell the heavy head, when he had lived within two of an hundred years: so fell the crown from his head when he had judged Israel about forty years: Thus did his sin set under a cloud, thus was the folly and wickedness of those sons of his, whom he indulged, his ruin at last. Thus doth God sometimes set marks of his displeasure upon good men in this life, who have miscarried themselves, that others may hear and fear, and take warning. A man may die miserably, and yet not die eternally; may come to an untimely end, and yet the end be peace. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that Eli died the death of an unredeemed ass, whose neck was to be broke, *Exod. xiii. 23.* Yet we must observe, to Eli's praise, that it was the loss of the ark that was his death, not the slaughter of his sons: He doth in effect say, Let me fall with the ark; for what pious Is-

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raelite can live with any comfort when God's ordinances are removed? Farewell all in this world, even life itself, if the ark be gone.

19. ¶ And his daughter-in-law, Phineas' wife, was with child, *near* to be delivered: and when she heard the tidings that the ark of God was taken, and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she bowed herself and travailed; for her pains came upon her. 20. And about the time of her death, the women that stood by her, said unto her, Fear not, for thou hast born a son. But she answered not, neither did she regard it. 21. And she named the child I-chabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel: (because the ark of God was taken, and because of her father-in-law and her husband.) 22. And she said, The glory is departed from Israel: for the ark of God is taken.

We have here another melancholy story, that carries on the desolations of Eli's house, and the sorrowful resentment the tidings of the ark's captivity met with. It is concerning the wife of Phineas, one of those ungracious sons of Eli, that had brought all this mischief on Israel. It cost her her life, though young, as well as her father-in-law, that was old; for many a green head, as well as many a hoary head, has been brought by sorrow to the grave: It worketh death.

By what is here related of her, it appears,

1. That she was a woman of a very tender spirit. Providence so ordered it, that just at this time she was near her count's end; and our Saviour hath said, *Woe to them that are with child, or give suck*, in such days as these, *Matt. xxiv. 19.* and so little joy will there then be in the birth, even of a man child, that it will be said, *Blessed are the wombs that bare not*, *Luke xxiii. 29.* The amazing news coming in this unhappy juncture, it put her into labour, as great frights or other strong passions sometimes do: When she heard of the death of her father-in-law whom she revered, and her husband, whom as bad as he was, she loved, but especially of the loss of the ark, *she travailed, for her pains came thick upon her, ver. 19.* and the tidings so seized her spirits, at a time when they needed all possible supports, that though she had strength to bear the child, she soon after fainted and died away, being very willing to let life go, when she had lost the greatest comforts of her life. Those who are drawing near to that needful hour, have need to treasure up for themselves comforts from the covenant of grace, to balance not only the usual sorrows, but any thing extraordinary, that may add to the grief, which they do not foresee. Faith, at such a time, will keep from fainting, *Psal. xxvii. 13.*

2. That she was a woman of a very gracious spirit, though matched to an ill husband: Her concern for the death of her husband, and her father-in-law, was an evidence of her natural affection, but her much greater concern for the loss of the ark, was an evidence of her pious and devout affection to God and sacred things. The former helped to hasten her travail, but it appears by her dying words that the latter lay nearer her heart, *ver. 22. She said, the glory is departed from Israel*, not lamenting so much the sinking of that particular family to which she was related, as the general calamity of Israel in the captivity of the ark. This, This was it that was her grief, that was her death.

1. This made her regardless of her child. The women that attended her, who, it is likely, were some of the first rank in the city, encouraged her, and thinking that her concerns was most about the issue of her pains, when the child was born, *said unto her, Fear not*, now the work is past, for thou hast born a son, and perhaps it was her first-born, but she answered not, neither did she regard it. The sorrows of her travail, if she had had no other, would have been forgotten, for joy that a man-child was born into the world, *John xvi. 11.* But what is that joy, (1.) To one that feels herself dying; no joy but that which is spiritual and divine will stand us in any stead then; death is too serious a thing to admit the relish of any earthly joy, it is all flat and sapless then. (2.) What is it to one that is lamenting the loss of the ark! Small comfort could she have of a child born in Israel, in Shiloh, when the ark is gone, and is a prisoner in the hand of the Philistines. What pleasure can we take in our creature comforts and enjoyments, if we want God's word and ordinances, especially if we want the comfort of his gracious presence, and the light of his countenance! *As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs* to such heavy hearts.

2. This made her give her child a name, which should perpetuate the remembrance of the calamity, and her sense of it. She has nothing to say to the child, only it being her province, now her husband was dead, to name the child, she orders them to call it I-chabod, *i. e. Where is the glory?* or, *Alas for the glory*; or, *There is no glory*, *ver. 21.* which she thus exclaims with her dying lips, *ver. 22. The glory is departed from Israel; for the ark of God is taken.* Call the child inglorious, for so he is; the glory of Israel is gone, and there appears no hope of ever retrieving it; never let the name of an Israelite, much less a priest, carry glory in it any more, now the ark is taken. Note, 1. The purity and plenty of God's ordinances, and the tokens of his presence in them, are the glory of any people, much more than their wealth and trade and interest among the nations. 2. Nothing is more cutting, more killing to a faithful Israelite, than the want and loss of these. If God go, the glory goes, and all good goes. Woe unto us if he depart.

C H A P. V.

It is now time to enquire what is become of the ark of God; we cannot but think that we shall hear more of that sacred treasure. I should have thought the next news would have been, that all Israel, from Dan to Beer-sheba, had gathered together as one man with a resolution to bring it back, or die in the attempt: but we find not any motion made of that kind, so little was there of zeal or courage left among them. Nay, we do not find, that they deputed a treaty with the Philistines about the ransom of it, or offered any thing in lieu of it; it is gone, and let it go. Many have justness enough to lament the loss of the ark, that have not hardihood enough to take one step towards the retrieve of it, no more than Israel here. If the ark will help itself it may, for they will not help it. Unworthy they were of the name of Israelites, that could thus tamely part with the glory of Israel. God would therefore take the work into his own hands, and plead his own cause, since men would not appear for him. We are told in this chapter, (1.) How the Philistines triumphed over the ark, ver. 1, 2. and, (2.) How the ark triumphed over the Philistines.

(1.) *Over Dagon their God, ver. 3—5. (2.) Over the Philistines themselves, who were sorely plagued with emerods, and made weary of the ark; the men of Ashdod first, ver. 6, 7. then the men of Gath, ver. 8, 9. and lastly those of Ekron, which forced them at length upon a resolution to send the ark back to the land of Israel: for when God judgeth he will overcome.*

1. **A**ND the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Eben-ezer unto Ashdod. 2. When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. 3. ¶ And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth, before the ark of the LORD: and they took Dagon and set him in his place again. 4. And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground, before the ark of the LORD: and the head of Dagon, and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold, only the stump of Dagon was left to him. 5. ¶ Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon's house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.

Here is, 1. The Philistines triumph over the ark, which they were the more pleased, the more proud, to be now masters of, because before the battle they were possessed with a mighty fear of it, chap. iv. 7. When they had it in their hands, God restrained them that they did not offer any violence to it, did not break it to pieces, as the Israelites were ordered to do by the idols of the heathen, but shewed some respect to it, and carefully carried it to a place of safety. Whether their curiosity led them to open it, and read what was written with the finger of God on the two tables of stone that were in it we are not told; perhaps they looked no farther than the golden outside, and the cherubims that covered it, like children that are more affected with the fine binding of their bibles, than with the precious matter contained in them. They carried it to Ashdod, one of their five cities, and that in which Dagon's temple was, there they placed the ark of God, by Dagon, ver. 2. Either, (1.) As a sacred thing, which they designed to pay some religious respects to, in conjunction with Dagon; for the gods of the heathen were never looked upon as averse to partners. Though the nations would not change their gods, yet they would multiply them and add to them. But they were mistaken in the God of Israel, when, in putting his ark by Dagon's image, they intended to do him honour; for he is not worshipped at all if he be not worshipped alone. *The Lord our God is one Lord.* Or rather, (2.) They placed it there as a trophy of victory, in honour to Dagon their god, to whom no doubt they intended to offer a great sacrifice, as they had done when they had taken Samson, *Judg. xvi. 23, 24.* boasting, that as then they had triumphed over Israel's champion, so now over Israel's God. What a reproach was this to God's great name! What a disgrace to the throne of his glory! Shall the ark, the symbol of God's presence, be a prisoner to Dagon, a dunghill deity? So it is, because God will shew of how little account the ark of the covenant is, if the covenant itself be broken and neglected; even sacred signs are not things that either he is tied to, or we can trust to. So it is for a time, that God may have so much the more glory, in reckoning with those that thus affronted him, and might get him honour upon them. Having punished Israel that betrayed the ark, by giving it into the hands of the Philistines, he will next deal with those that abused it; and will fetch it out of their hands again. Thus even the wrath of men shall praise him; and he is bringing about his own glory, even then when he seems to neglect it, *Psal. lxxvi. 10.* Out of the eater shall come forth meat.

2. The ark's triumph over Dagon. Once and again Dagon was made to fall before it. If they designed to do honour to the ark, God hereby shewed that he valued not their honour, nor would he accept it, for he will be worshipped not with any god, but above all gods. *He owes a shame* (as Bishop Hall expressed it) *to those who will be making matches between himself and Belial.* But they really designed to affront it, and though for some hours Dagon stood by the ark, and it is likely stood above it, the ark at its footstool; yet the next morning, when the worshippers of Dagon came to pay their devotions to his shrine, they found their triumphing short, *Job xx. 5.*

1. Dagon, that is the image, for that was all the god, was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark, ver. 3. God had seemed to forget his ark, but see how the psalmist speaks of his appearing at last to vindicate his own honour. When he had delivered his strength into captivity, and all seemed going to wreck and ruin, *Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine, Psalm lxxiii. 60—63.* And therefore he prevented the utter desolations of the Jewish church, because he feared the wrath of the enemy, *Deut. xxxii. 26, 27.* Great care was taken in setting up the images of their gods to fix them. The prophet takes notice of it, *Isa. xli. 7.* He fastened it with nails, that it should not be moved; and again, *chap. xlii. 7.* and yet Dagon's fastnesses stood him in no stead; the ark of God triumphs over him upon his own dunghill, in his own temple, down he comes before the ark directly towards it, though the ark was set on one side of him, as it were pointing to the conqueror, to whom he is constrained to yield and do obeisance. Note, The kingdom of Satan certainly will fall before the kingdom of Christ, error before truth, profaneness before godliness, and corruption before grace in the hearts of the faithful. When the interests of religion seem to be run down, and ready to sink, yet even then we may be confident, that the day of their triumph will come. Great is the truth, and will prevail. Dagon, by falling prostrate before the ark of God, which was a posture of adoration, did as it were direct his worshippers to pay their homage to the God of Israel, as greater than all gods. See *Exod. xviii. 11.*

2. The priests that found their idol on the floor, make all the haste they can, before it be known, to set him in his place again. A sorry silly thing to make a god of, that when he was down, wanted help to get up again; and foolish wretches those were that could pray for help from that idol that needed, and in effect implored their help. How could they attribute their victory to the power of Dagon, when Dagon himself cannot keep his own ground before the ark? But they are resolved Dagon shall be their god still, and therefore set him in his place. Bishop Hall observes hence, it is just with God, that those who want grace shall want wit too; and it is in the power of superstition to turn men into the stocks and stones they worship: *They that make them are like unto them.* What is it that the great upholders of the antichristian kingdom are doing at this day, but heaving Dagon up,

and labouring to set him in his place again; and healing the deadly wound that has been given to the beast; but if the reformation be the cause of God, before which it has begun to fall, it shall not prevail, but shall surely fall before it.

3. The next night Dagon fell the second time, ver. 4. they rose early, either as usual to make their addresses to their god, or earlier than usual, being impatient to know whether Dagon had kept his standing this night, and to their great confusion, they find his case now worse than before; whether the matter of which the image was made was apt to break or no, so it was, that the head and hands were cut off upon the threshold. So that nothing remained but the stump, or as the margin reads it, the fishy part of Dagon; for (as many learned men conjecture) the upper part of this image was in a human shape, the lower in the shape of a fish; as mermaids are painted. Such strong delusions were idolaters given up to, so vain were they in their imaginations, and so wretchedly darkened with their foolish hearts, as to worship the images, not only of creatures, but of nonentities, the mere figments of fancy. Well, the mishapen monster is by this fall made to appear, (1.) Very ridiculous and worthy to be despised. A pretty figure Dagon made now, when the fall had anatomized him, and shewed how the human part and the fishy part were artificially put together, which perhaps the ignorant devotees had been made to believe was done by miracle. (2.) Very impotent, and unworthy to be prayed to, or trusted to; for his losing his head and hands spoke him utterly destitute both of wisdom and power, and for ever disabled either to advise or act for them. This they got by setting Dagon in his place again; they had better have let him alone when he was down: But they can speed no better that contend with God, and will set up that which he is throwing down, *Mal. i. 4.* God by this magnified his ark and made it honourable then, when they vilified and made it contemptible: He also shewed what will be the end of all that which is set up in opposition to him: *Gird yourselves, but ye shall be broken to pieces, Isa. viii. 9.*

4. The threshold of Dagon's temple was ever after looked upon as sacred, and not to be trodden on, ver. 5. Some think, reference is had to this superstitious usage of Dagon's worshippers, *Zeph. i. 9.* where God threatens to punish those, that in imitation of them leaped over the threshold. One would have thought, this incontestible proof of the ark's victory over Dagon, should have convinced the Philistines of their folly in worshipping such a senseless thing, and that from henceforward they should have paid their homage to the conqueror; but instead of being reformed, they were hardened in their idolatry, and as evil men and seducers use to do, went worse and worse, *2 Tim. iii. 13.* Instead of despising Dagon for the threshold's sake that beheaded him, they are almost ready to worship the threshold, because it was the block on which it was beheaded; and will never let their foot on that on which Dagon lost his head; shaming those who tread under foot the blood of the covenant, and trample on things truly sacred. Yet this piece of superstition would help to perpetuate the remembrance of Dagon's disgrace, for with the custom the reason would be transmitted to posterity, and the children that should be born, enquiring why the threshold of Dagon's temple must not be trodden on, would be told, that Dagon fell before the ark of the Lord: Thus God would have honour, even out of their superstition. We are not told, that they repaired the broken image, it is likely they got the ark of God away first, and then they patched it up again, and set it in its place; for it seems, they cannot deliver their souls, nor say, *Is there not a lie in our right hand, Isa. xlii. 20.*

6. ¶ But the hand of the LORD was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and smote them with emerods, even Ashdod and the coasts thereof. 7. And when the men of Ashdod saw that it was so, they said, The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us: for his hand is fore upon us, and upon Dagon our god. 8. They sent therefore, and gathered all the lords of the Philistines unto them, and said, What shall we do with the ark of the God of Israel? and they answered, Let the ark of the God of Israel be carried about unto Gath: And they carried the ark of the God of Israel about thither. 9. And it was so, that, after they had carried it about, the hand of the LORD was against the city with a very great destruction: and he smote the men of the city, both small and great, and they had emerods in their secret parts. 10. Therefore they sent the ark of God to Ekron: and it came to pass as the ark of God came to Ekron, that the Ekronites cried out, saying, They have brought about the ark of the God of Israel to us, to slay us and our people. 11. So they sent and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it go again to his own place, that it slay not us, and our people: for there was a deadly destruction throughout all the city; the hand of God was very heavy there. 12. And the men that died not, were smitten with the emerods: and the cry of the city went up to heaven.

The downfall of Dagon, if the people had made a good use of it, and had been brought by it to repent of their idolatries, and to humble themselves before the God of Israel, and seek his face; that might have prevented the vengeance which God here proceeds to take upon them for the indignities done to his ark, and their obstinate adherence to their idol, in defiance of the plainest conviction: *Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see, Isaiah xxvi. 11.* And if they will not see the glory, they shall feel the weight of God's hand, for so the Philistines did; *The hand of the Lord was heavy upon them, ver. 6.* and he not only convinced them of their folly, but severely chastised their insolence.

1. He destroyed them, viz. cut many of them off by sudden death, those we may suppose, that had most triumphed in the captivity of the ark. This is distinguished from the disease with which the others were smitten. At Gath it is called a great destruction, ver. 9. a deadly destruction, ver. 11. And it is expressly said, ver. 12. those that were smitten with emerods were the men that died not by the other destruction, which probably was the pestilence. They boasted of the great slaughter which their sword had made among the Israelites, *chap. iv. 10.* But God lets them know, that though he did not see fit to draw Israel's sword against them, they were unworthy to be employed, yet God had a sword of his own, with which he could make a no less dreadful execution among them, which if he whet, and his hand take hold on judgment,

ment, he will render vengeance to his enemies, Deut. xxxiii. 41, 42. Note, Those that contend with God, his ark and his Israel, will infallibly be ruined by it at last. If conviction conquer not, destruction shall.

2. Those that were not destroyed he smote with emerods, ver. 6. in their secret parts, ver. 9. so grievous that, ver. 12. the cry went up to heaven, i. e. it might be heard a great way off, and perhaps, in the extremity of their pain and misery they cried, not to Dagon, but to the God of heaven. The Palmist speaking of this sore judgment upon the Philistines, describes it thus, that God smote his enemies in the hinder part, and put them to a perpetual reproach, Psal. lxxviii. 66. The emerods (which we call the piles, and perhaps, was then a more grievous disease that it is now) is threatened among the judgments that would be the fruit of the curse, Deut. xxviii. 27. It was both a painful and shameful disease; a vile disease for vile deserts: by it God would humble their pride, and put contempt upon them, as they had done upon his ark. The disease was epidemical, and perhaps among them a new disease; *Ashdod was smitten, and the coasts thereof*, the country round. For contempt of God's ordinances many are weak and sick, and many sleep, 1 Cor. xi. 30.

3. The men of Ashdod were soon aware, that it was the hand of God, the God of Israel, ver. 7. So were they constrained to acknowledge his power and dominion, and themselves within his jurisdiction, and yet they would not renounce Dagon, nor submit to him; but rather, now he touched their bone and their flesh, and in a tender part, they were ready to curse him to his face; and instead of making their peace with him, and courting the stay of his ark upon better terms, they desired to get clear of it, as the Gadarenes, who when they had lost their swine, desired Christ to depart out of their coasts. Carnal hearts, when they smart under the judgments of God, would rather, if it were possible, put him far from them, than enter into a covenant and communion with him, and make him their friend: Thus the men of Ashdod resolve, *The ark of the God of Israel shall not abide with us.*

4. It is resolved to change the place of its imprisonment. A great council was called, and the question proposed to all the lords was, What shall we do with the ark? And at last it was agreed, That it should be carried to Gath, ver. 8. Some superstitious conceit they had, that the fault was in the place, and that the ark would be better pleased with another lodging, further off from Dagon's temple; and therefore instead of returning it, as they should have done, to its own place, they contrive to send it to another place; Gath is pitched upon, a place famed for the race of giants, but their strength and stature are no fence against the pestilence and the emerods, the men of that city were smitten, both small and great, ver. 9. both dwarfs and giants, all alike to God's judgments, none so great as to over-top them, none so small as to be over-looked by them.

5. They were all at last sick of the ark, and were willing to be rid of it. It was sent from Gath to Ekron, and coming by order of council the Ekronites could not refuse it, but were much exasperated against their great men for sending them such a fatal present, ver. 10. *They have sent it to us to stay us and our people.* The ark had the tables of the law in it; and nothing more welcome to faithful Israelites than the word of God, to them it is a favour of life unto life; but to uncircumcised Philistines, that persist in enmity to God, nothing more dreadful nor unwelcome; to them it is a favour of death unto death. A general assembly is instantly called, to advise about sending the ark again to its own place, ver. 11. While they are consulting about it, the hand of God is doing execution; and their contrivances made to evade the judgment, do but spread it; many drop down dead among them, many more raging ill of the emerods, ver. 12. What shall they do? Their triumphs in the captivity of the ark are soon turned into lamentations, and they are as fond to quit as ever they had been to seize it. Note, God can easily make Jerusalem a burthensome stone to all that heave at it, Zech. xii. 3. Those that fight against God will soon have enough of it, and first or last will be made to know, that none ever hardened their hearts against him and prospered. The wealth that is got by fraud and injustice, especially that is got by sacrilege and robbing God, though swallowed greedily and rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel, must be vomited up again; for till it be, the sinner shall not feel quietness in his belly, Job xx. 15—20.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter we have the return of the ark to the land of Israel, whither we are now gladly to attend it, and observe, (1.) How the Philistines dismissed it by the advice of their priests, ver. 1—11. With rich presents to the God of Israel, to make an atonement for their sin, ver. 3, 4, 5. and yet with a project to bring it back, unless providence directed the kine, contrary to the inclination, to go to the land of Israel, ver. 8, 9. (2.) How the Israelites entertained it. 1. With great joy and sacrifices of praise, ver. 12—18. 2. With an over-bold curiosity to look into it, for which many of them were struck dead, the terror of which moved them to send it forward to another city, ver. 19—21.

1. **A**ND the ark of the LORD was in the country of the Philistines seven months. 2. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place. 3. And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return him a trespass-offering: then ye shall be healed, and it shall be known to you, why his hand is not removed from you. 4. Then said they, What shall be the trespass-offering which we shall return to him? They answered, Five golden emerods, and five golden mice, according to the number of the lords of the Philistines: for one plague was on you all, and on your lords. 5. Wherefore ye shall make images of your emerods, and images of your mice that mar the land; and ye shall give glory unto the God of Israel: peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you, and from off your gods, and from off your land. 6. Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed? 7. Now therefore

make a new cart, and take two milch-kine, on which there hath come no yoke, and tie the kine to the cart: and bring their calves home from them: 8. And take the ark of the LORD, and lay it upon the cart, and put the jewels of gold which ye return him for a trespass offering, in a coffer by the side thereof, and send it away, that it may go. 9. And see, if it goeth up by the way of his own coast to Beth-shemesh, then he hath done us this great evil: but if not, then we shall know that it is not his hand that smote us; it was a chance that happened to us.

The first words of the chapter tells us, how long the captivity of the ark continued, it was in the country of the Philistines seven months. In the field of the Philistines: so it is in the original; from which some gather, that they having tried in all their cities, and found it a plague to the inhabitants of each, at length they sent it into the open fields, upon which mice sprung up out of the ground in great multitudes, and destroyed the corn which was now near ripe and marred the land. With that judgment they were plagued, ver. 5. and yet it is not mentioned in the foregoing chapter; so God let them know, that wherever they carried the ark, so long as they carried it captive; they should find it a curse to them. *Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed in the field*, Deut. xxviii. 16. But most take it to signify, as we render it, *The country of the Philistines*. Now, (1.) Seven months Israel was punished with the absence of the ark, that special token of God's presence. How bare did the tabernacle look without it! How was the holy city now a desolation, and the holy land a wilderness! A melancholy time no doubt it was to the good people among them, particularly to Samuel; but they had this to comfort themselves with, as we have in the like distress, when we are deprived of the comfort of public ordinances, that wherever the ark is, *the Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven*, and by faith and prayer we may have access with boldness to him there. We may have God nigh unto us, when the ark is at a distance. (2.) Seven months the Philistines were punished with the presence of the ark; so long it was a plague to them, because they would not send it home sooner. Note, Sinners lengthen out their own miseries, by their obstinate refusing to part with their sins. Egypt's plagues had been fewer than ten, if Pharaoh's heart had not been hardened not to let the people go.

But at length it is determined, the ark must be sent back, there is no remedy they are undone if they detain it.

1. The priests and the diviners are consulted about it, ver. 2. They were supposed to be best acquainted both with the rules of wisdom, and with the rights of worship and atonement. And the Israelites being their neighbours, and famed above all people for the institutions of their religion; they had, no doubt the curiosity to acquaint themselves with their laws and usages, and therefore it was proper to ask them, *What shall we do to the ark of Jehovah?* All nations have had a regard to their priests, as the men whose lips keep knowledge. Had the Philistines diviners? we have divines, of whom we should enquire, wherewith we shall come before the Lord, how our selves before the most high God.

2. They give their advice very fully, and seem to be very unanimous in it. It was a wonder, they did not, as friends to their country, give it, *ex officio*, before they were asked.

1. They urge it upon them, that it was absolutely necessary to send the ark back, from the example of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, ver. 6. Some, it may be, were loth to yield, and were willing to try it out with the ark a while longer, and to them they apply themselves; *Wherefore do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh did?* It seems they were well acquainted with the Mosaic history, and could cite precedents out of it. This good use we should make of remaining records of God's judgments upon obstinate sinners, we should by them be warned, not to harden our hearts as they did. It is much cheaper learning by other people's experience than by our own. The Egyptians were forced at last to let Israel go, therefore let the Philistines yield in time to let the ark go.

2. They advise, that when they had sent it back, they should send a trespass-offering with it, ver. 3. Whatever the gods of other nations were, they knew the God of Israel was a jealous God, and how strict he was in his demands of sin-offerings, and trespass-offerings, from his own people; and therefore, since they found how highly they resented the affront of holding his ark captive, they with whom he had such a quarrel, must in any wise return him a trespass-offering! and they could not expect to be healed upon any other terms. Injured justice demands satisfaction; so far natural light instructed men; but when they began to contrive what that satisfaction should be, they became wretchedly vain in their imaginations. But those who by wilful sin have imprisoned the truth in unrighteousness, as the Philistines did the ark, Rom. i. 18. may conclude, that their is no making their peace with him whom they have thus injured, but by a sin-offering; and we know but one that can take away sin.

3. They direct, that this trespass-offering should be an acknowledgment of the punishment of their iniquity: by which they might take shame to themselves as conquered and yielding, and guilty before God, and might give glory to the God of Israel, as their mighty conqueror, and most just avenger, ver. 5. They must make images of the emerods, i. e. of the swellings and sores in their secret parts, with which they had been afflicted; so making the reproach of that shameful disease perpetuated by their own act and deed, Psal. lxxviii. 66. also images of the mice that had marred the land, owning thereby the almighty power of the God of Israel, who would chastise and humble them, even in the day of their triumph, by such small and despicable animals: The images must be made of gold, the most precious metal, to intimate, that they would gladly purchase their peace with the God of Israel at any rate, and would not think it bought too dear with gold, with much fine gold. The golden emerods must be in number five, according to the number of the lords, who, it is likely, were all afflicted with them, and were content thus to own it; it was advised, that the golden mice should be five too, because the whole country was infested with them; it should seem, upon second thoughts, they sent more of them, according to the number both of the fenced cities and of country villages, ver. 18. Their priests mind them, that one plague was on them all, they could not blame one another, for they were all guilty, which they plainly told, by being all plagued. Their proposal to offer a trespass-offering for their offence, was conformable enough to divine revelation at that time; but to send such things as these for trespass-offerings was very foreign, and shewed them grossly ignorant of the methods of reconciliation, appointed by the law of Moses; for there it appears all along, that it is blood, and not gold, that makes atonement for the soul.

4. They encourage them to hope, that hereby they would take an effectual course to get rid of the plague, *ye shall be healed*, ver. 3. For it seems the disease was obstinate to all the methods of cure their physicians had described, let them therefore send back the ark, and then, say they, *It shall be known to you why his hand is not removed from you*, i. e. by this it will appear, whether

whether it is for your detaining the ark that you are thus plagued, for if it be, upon your delivering of it up the plague will cease. God has sometimes put his people upon making such a trial, whether their reformation would not be their relief, *Prove me now herewith saith the Lord of hosts*, Mal. iii. 10. Hag. ii. 19. Yet they speak doubtfully, *ver. 5. Peradventure he will lighten his hand from off you*; as if now they begin to think, that the judgment might come from God's hand, and yet not be moved, immediately upon the restitution of the ark; however that was the likeliest way to obtain mercy. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease.

5. Yet they put them in a way to make a farther trial, whether it was the hand of the God of Israel, that had smitten them with these plagues or no. They must, in honour of the ark, put it on a new cart or carriage, to be drawn by two milch cows, that had calves daily sucking of them, *ver. 7. unused to draw, and inclined to home*; both for the sake of the crib where they were fed, and the calves they fed, and, besides, altogether unacquainted with the road that led towards the land of Israel; they must have no one to lead or drive them, but must take their own way, which, in all reason one might expect, would be home again; and yet, unless the God of Israel, after all the other miracles he has wrought, will work one more, and by an invisible power lead these cows, contrary to their natural instinct and inclination, to the land of Israel, and particularly to Beth-shemesh, they will retract their former opinion, and will believe it was not the hand of God that smote them, but it was a chance that *happened to them*, *ver. 8, 9.* Thus did God suffer himself to be tempted and prescribed to, after he had been otherwise affronted, by these uncircumcised Philistines. Would they have been content, that the honour of Dagon, their god, should have been put to such an issue as this? See how willing bad men are to shift off their convictions of the hand of God upon them, and to believe, when they are in trouble, it is a *chance that happens to them*; and if so, the rod has no voice, which they are concerned to hear or heed.

10. ¶ And the men did so: and took two milch-kine, and tied them to the cart, and shut up their calves at home: 11. And they laid the ark of the LORD upon the cart, and the coffer with the mice of gold, and the images of their emerods. 12. And the kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left; and the lords of the Philistines went after them unto the border of Beth-shemesh. 13. And *they of Beth-shemesh were* reaping their wheat-harvest in the valley: and they lifted up their eyes, and saw the ark, and rejoiced to see it. 14. And that cart came into the field of Joshua a Beth-shemite, and stood there, where *there was* a great stone: and they clave the wood of the cart, and offered the kine a burnt-offering unto the LORD. 15. And the Levites took down the ark of the LORD, and the coffer that *was* with it, wherein the jewels of gold *were*, and put *them* on the great stone: and the men of Beth-shemesh offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed sacrifices the same day unto the LORD. 16. And when the five lords of the Philistines had seen it, they returned to Ekron the same day. 17. And these *are* the golden emerods which the Philistines returned for a trespass-offering unto the LORD: for Ashdod one, for Gaza one, for Askelon one, for Gath one, for Ekron one. 18. And the golden mice according to the number of all the cities of the Philistines, *belonging* to the five lords, both of fenced cities, and of country villages, even unto the great *stone of* Abel, whercon they set down the ark of the LORD: *which stone remaineth* unto this day, in the field of Joshua the Beth-shemite.

We are here told,

1. How the Philistines dismissed the ark, *ver. 10, 11.* they were made as glad to part with it, as ever they had been to take it; as God had fetched Israel out of the house of bondage, so now the ark out of its captivity, in such a manner, as that *Egypt was glad when they departed*, Psalm cv. 38. (1.) They received no money or price for the ransom of it, as they hoped to have done, even beyond a king's ransom. Thus it is prophesied of Cyrus, *Ips. xlv. 13. He shall let go my captives, not for price, or reward.* Nay, (2.) He gave jewels of gold, as the Egyptians did to the Israelites, to be rid of it. Thus the ark that was carried into the land of the Philistines a trophy of their victory, carried back with it trophies of its own, and lasting monuments of the disgrace of the Philistines. Note, God will be no loser in his glory at last, by the successes of the church's enemies against his ark, but will get him honour from those that seek to do dishonour to him.

3. How the kine brought it to the land of Israel, *ver. 12.* They took the straight way to Beth-shemesh, the next city of the land of Israel, and a priest's city, and turned not aside. This was a wonderful instance of the power of God over the brute creatures and, all things considered, no less than a miracle. That the cattle unaccustomed to the yoke should draw so even, so orderly, and still go forward, that, without any driver, they should go from home, to which all tame creatures have a natural inclination, and from their own calves, to which they had a natural affection; that, without any director, they should go the straight road to Beth-shemesh, a city eight or ten miles off, never missed the way, never turned aside into the fields to feed themselves, nor turned back home to feed their calves; they went on lowing for their young ones, by which it appeared they had not forgot them, but that nature was sensible of the grievance of going from them, the power of the God of nature therefore appeared so much the greater; in over-ruling one of the strongest instincts of nature. These two kine, saith Dr. Lightfoot, knew their owner, their great owner, *Ips. i. 3.* whom Hophni and Phinehas knew not; to which I may add, they brought home the ark, to shame the stupidity of Israel, that made no attempt to fetch it home. God's providence is conversant about the motions even of brute creatures, and serves its own purpose by them. The lords of the Philistines, with a suitable retinue, no doubt, went after them, wondering at the power of the God of Israel; and thus they, who thought to triumph over the ark, were made to lacquey it after the ark.

3. How it was welcomed to the land of Israel. *The men of Beth-shemesh*

were reaping their wheat-harvest, *ver. 13.* They were going on with their worldly business, and were in no care about the ark, made no enquiries what was become of it; if they had, it is likely they might have had private intelligence beforehand of its coming, and might have gone to meet it, and conducted it into their own border. But they were as careless as the people that *ceiled their own houses, and let God's house lie waste.* Note, God will, in his own time, effect the deliverance of his church, not only though it be fought against by its enemies, but though it be neglected by its friends. Some observe, that the returning ark found the men of Beth-shemesh, not idling or sporting in the streets of the city, but busy, reaping their corn in the fields, and well employed: thus the tidings of the birth of Christ were brought to the shepherds, when they were *keeping their flock by night.* The devil visits idle men with his temptations, God visits industrious men with his favours.

The same invisible hand that directed the kine to the land of Israel, brought them into the field of Joshua, and in that field they stood; some think for the owner's sake, on whom, being a very good man, they suppose God designed to put this honour. I rather think, it was for the sake of the great stone in that field, which was convenient to put the ark upon, and which is spoken of, *ver. 14, 15—18.*

Now, 1. When the reapers, *saw the ark, they rejoiced*, *ver. 13.* their joy for that was greater than the joy of harvest, and therefore they left their work to bid it welcome. When the Lord turned again the captivity of his ark, they were like the men that dream, then was their mouth filled with laughter, *Psal. cxxvi. 1, 2.* Though they had not zeal and courage enough to attempt the rescue or ransom of it, yet, when it did come, they bid it heartily welcome. Note, The return of the ark, and the revival of holy ordinances, after days of restraint and trouble, cannot but be matter of great joy to every faithful Israelite.

2. They offered up the kine for a burnt-offering, to the honour of God, and made use of the wood of the cart for fuel, *ver. 14.* probably the Philistines intended these, when they sent them to be a part of their trespass-offering, to make atonement, *ver. 3—7.* However, the men of Beth-shemesh looked upon it as proper to make this use of them, because it was by no means fit that ever they should be put to any other use; never shall that cart carry any common thing, that has once carried that sacred symbol of the divine presence: and the kine had been under such an immediate conduct of heaven, that God had, as it were, already laid claim to them; they were servants to him, and therefore must be sacrifices to him; and no doubt were accepted, though females, whereas in strictness, every burnt-offering was to be a male.

3. They deposited the ark, with the chest of jewels that the Philistines presented, upon the great stone in the open field; a cold lodging for the ark of the Lord, and a very mean one; yet better so than in Dagon's temple, or in the hands of the Philistines. It is desirable to seek the ark in its habitation in all the circumstances of solemnity and splendor, but better have it upon a great stone in the field of the wood, than be without it.

The intrinsic grandeur of instituted ordinances ought not to be diminished in our eyes, by the meanness and poverty of the place where they are administered. As the burning of the cart and cows, that brought home the ark, might be construed to signify their hopes, that should never be carried away again out of the land of Israel, so the setting it upon a great stone might signify their hopes, that it should be established again upon a firm foundation. The church is built upon a rock.

4. They offered sacrifices of thanksgiving to God, some think, upon the great stone, more probably, upon an altar of earth made for the purpose, *ver. 15.* and the case being extraordinary, the law for offering at the altar in the court of the tabernacle was dispensed with, and the easier, because Shiloh was now dismantled. God himself had forsaken it, and the ark, which was its chief glory, they had with them here. Beth-shemesh, though it lay within the lot of the tribe of Dan, yet belonged to Judah, so that this accidental bringing of the ark hither, was an indication of its designeth settlement there, in process of time, for when God *refuseth the tabernacle of Joseph, he choiceth the tribe of Judah*, *Psal. lxxviii. 67, 68.* It was one of those cities which was assigned out of the lot of Judah to the *sons of Aaron*, *Josh. xxi. 16.* Whether should the ark go, but to a priest's city; and it was well they had those of that sacred order ready, (for though they are called Levites, *ver. 15.* yet it should seem they were priests) both to take down the ark, and to offer the sacrifices.

5. The lords of the Philistines returned to Ekron, much affected, we may suppose, with what they had seen of the glory of God, and the zeal of the Israelites. and yet not reclaimed from the worship of Dagon; for how seldom has a nation changed their gods, though they were no gods? *Jer. ii. 11.* Though they cannot but think the God of Israel, *glorious in holiness, and fearful in praises*, yet they are resolved they will think Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, at least as good as he, and to him they will cleave however, because he is theirs.

Lastly, Notice is taken of the continuance of the great stone in the same place, there it is *unto this day*, *ver. 18.* because it remained a lasting memorial of this great event, and served to support the traditional history, by which it was transmitted to posterity. The fathers would tell it the children; this is the stone upon which the ark of God was set, when it came out of the Philistines hands: a thing never to be forgotten.

19. ¶ And he smote the men of Beth-shemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter. 20. And the men of Beth-shemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall he go up from us? 21. ¶ And they sent messenger to the inhabitants of Kirjathjearim, saying, The Philistines have brought again the ark of the LORD? come ye down and fetch it up to you.

Here is, 1. The sin of the men of Beth-shemesh, *They looked into the ark of the Lord*, *ver. 19.* Every Israelite had heard great talk of the ark, and had been possessed with a mighty veneration for it, but they had been told, that it was lodged within a veil, and even the high-priest himself might not look upon it but once a year, and then through a cloud of incense: Perhaps, this made many say (as we are apt to covet that which is forbidden) what a great deal they would give for a sight of it. Some of these Beth-shemites, we may suppose, for that reason, *rejoiced to see the ark*, *ver. 13.* more than for the sake of the public. Yet this did not content them, they might see it, but they would go further, they would take off the covering, which, it is likely, was nailed or sewed on, and look into it; under pretence of seeing whether the Philistines had not taken the two tables out of it, or some way damaged them; but really to gratify a sinful curiosity

curiosity of their own, which intruded into those things that God had thought fit to conceal from them. Note, It is a great affront to God for vain men to pry into, and meddle with, the secret things which belong not to them, *Deut. xxix. 29. Col. ii. 18.* We were all ruled by an ambition of forbidden knowledge. That which made this looking into the ark a great sin, was that it proceeded from a very low and mean opinion of the ark: The familiarity they had with it upon this occasion bred contempt and irreverence. Perhaps, they presumed upon their being priests; but the dignity of the ministerial office will be so far from excusing, that it will aggravate, a careless and irreverent treatment of holy things. They should, by their example, have taught others to keep their distance, and look upon the ark with a holy awe. Perhaps they presumed upon the kind entertainment they had given the ark, and the sacrifices they had now offered to welcome it home with, for this they thought the ark was indebted to them, and they might be allowed to repay themselves with the satisfaction of looking into it: But let no man think his service done for God will justify him in any instance of disrespect or irreverence towards the things of God. Or, It may be they presumed upon the present mean circumstances the ark was in, newly come out of captivity and unsettled; now it stood upon a cold stone they thought they might make bold with it, they should never have such another opportunity of being familiar with it. It is an offence to God, if we think meanly of his ordinances, because of the meanness of the manner of their administration. Had they looked with an understanding eye upon the ark, and not judged purely by outward appearance, they would have thought the ark never shone with greater majesty than it did now; it had triumphed over the Philistines, came out of its house of bondage, (like Christ out of the grave) by its own power; had they considered this, they would not have looked into it thus, as a common chest.

2. Their punishment for this sin. *He smote the men of Bethshemesh, many of them with a great slaughter.* How jealous is God for the honour of his ark? he will not suffer it to be profaned; *he not deceived, God is not mocked.* They that will not fear his goodness, and reverently use the tokens of his grace, shall be made to feel his justice, and sink under the tokens of his displeasure. They that pry into what is forbidden, and come too near to holy fire, will find it is at their peril. *He smote fifty thousand and seventy men.* This account of the numbers smitten, is expressed in a very unusual manner in the original, which besides the improbability, that there should be so many guilty, and so many slain, occasions many learned men to question, whether we take the matter right. In the original it is, *He smote in (or among) the people, threescore and ten men; fifty thousand men.* The Syriac and Arabic read it, fifty thousand and seventy men. The Chaldee reads it, seventy men of the elders, and fifty thousand of the common people. Seventy men as valuable as five thousand, so some, because they were priests. Some think the seventy men were the Bethshemites that were slain for looking into the ark, and the fifty thousand were those that were slain by the ark, in the land of the Philistines. *He smote seventy men,* that is, *fifty out of a thousand;* which was one in twenty, a half decimation; so some understand it. The Septuagint read it much as we do, he smote seventy men, and fifty thousand men. Josephus saith, only seventy were smitten.

3. The terror that was struck upon the men of Bethshemesh by this severe stroke. They said, as well they might, *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* ver. 20. Some think, it speaks their murmuring against God, as if he had dealt hardly and unjustly with them. Instead of quarrelling with themselves, and their own sins, they quarrelled with God, and his judgments; as *David was displeased,* in a case not much unlike, *2 Sam. vi. 8, 9.* I rather think, it speaks their awful and reverent adoration of God, as the Lord God, as a holy Lord God, and as a God before whom none is able to stand. This they infer from that tremendous judgment, *Who is able to stand before the God of the ark?* To stand before God to worship him, blessed be his name, is not impossible, we are through Christ invited, encouraged, and enabled to do it, but to stand before God, to contend with him, we are not able. Who is able to stand before the throne of his immediate glory, and look full upon it? *1 Tim. vi. 16.* Who is able to stand before the tribunal of his inflexible justice, and make his part good there? *Psal. cxxx. 3. cxliii. 2.* Who is able to stand before the arm of his provoked power, and either resist or bear the strokes of it? *Psal. lxxvi. 7.*

4. Their desire hereupon to be rid of the ark; they asked, *To whom shall he go up from us,* ver. 20. They should rather have asked, how may we make our peace with him, and recover his favour? *Mic. vi. 6, 7.* but they begin to be as weary of the ark, as the Philistines had been, whereas if they had treated it with due reverence, who knows, but it might have taken up its residence among them, and they had all been blessed for the ark's sake? But thus, when the word of God works with terror on sinners consciences, they instead of taking the blame and shame to themselves, quarrel with the word, and put that from them, *Jer. vi. 10.* They sent messengers to the elders of Kirjath-jearim, a strong city further up in the country, and begged of them to come and fetch the ark up thither, ver. 21. They durst not touch it to bring it thither themselves, but stood aloof from it as a dangerous thing: Thus do foolish men run from one extreme to the other, from presumptuous boldness to slavish shyness. Kirjath-jearim, i. e. the city of the woods, belonged to Judah, *Josh. xv. 9—60.* it lay in the way from Bethshemesh to Shiloh, so that when they sent to them to fetch it, we may suppose, they intended that from thence the elders of Shiloh should fetch it, but God intended otherwise. Thus it was sent from town to town, and no care taken of it by the public; a sign there was no king in Israel.

C H A P. VII.

In this chapter we have, (1.) *The eclipsing of the glory of the ark, by its privacy in Kirjath-jearim for many years,* ver. 1, 2. (2.) *The appearing of the glory of Samuel, in his public services for the good of Israel, to whom he was raised up to be a judge, and he was the last that bore that character.* This chapter gives us all the account we have of him, when he was in the prime of his time; for what we had before, was in his childhood, chap. ii. and iii. what we have of him after, was in his old age, chap. viii. 1. *We have him here active,* (1.) *In the reformation of Israel from their idolatry,* ver. 3, 4. (2.) *In the reviving of religion among them,* ver. 5, 6. (3.) *In praying for them against the invading Philistines,* ver. 7, 8, 9. *over whom, God, in answering to his prayer, gave them a glorious victory,* ver. 10, 11. (4.) *In erecting a thankful memorial of that victory,* ver. 12. (5.) *In the improvement of that victory,* ver. 13, 14. (6.) *In the administration of justice,* ver. 15—17. *And these were the things for which God was preparing and designing him, in the early vouchsafements of his grace to him.*

No. XLII.

1. **A**ND the men of Kirjath-jearim came, and fetched up the ark of the LORD, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill and sanctified Eleazar his son, to keep the ark of the LORD. 2. And it came to pass while the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the LORD.

1. Here we must attend the ark to Kirjath-jearim, and then leave it there to hear not a word more of it, till David fetched it thence above forty years after, *1 Sam. xiv. 18.* except once.

1. We are very willing to attend it thither, for the men of Bethshemesh have by their own folly made it a burden, which might have been a blessing; and gladly would we see it among those, to whom it will be a *favour of life unto life,* for in every place where it has been of late, it has been a *favour of death unto death.*

Now, (1.) The men of Kirjath-jearim cheerfully bring it among them, ver. 1. *They came,* at the first word, and fetched up the ark of the Lord. Their neighbours, the Bethshemites, were not so glad to be rid of it, but they were as glad to receive it, knowing very well that what slaughter the ark had made at Bethshemesh, was not an act of arbitrary power, but necessary justice, and they that suffered by it, must blame themselves, not the ark; we may depend upon the word which God hath said, *Jer. xxv. 6. Provoke me not, and I will do you no hurt.* Note, the judgments of God on those who profane his ordinances, should not make us afraid of the ordinances, but of profaning them, and making an ill use of them.

(1.) They carefully provide for its decent entertainment among them, as a welcome guest, with true affection, and as an honourable guest, with respect and reverence. (1.) They provide a proper place to receive it. They had no public building to adorn with it, but they lodged it in the house of Abinadab, which stood upon the highest ground, and probably, was the best house in their city; or, perhaps the master of it was the most eminent man they had for piety, and best affected to the ark. The men of Bethshemesh left it exposed upon a stone in the open field, and though it was a city of priests, none of them received it into his house; but the men of Kirjath-jearim, though common Israelites, gave it house-room, and, no doubt, the best furnished room in the house to which it was brought. Note, 1. God will find out a resting-place for his ark; if some thrust it from them, yet the hearts of others shall be inclined to receive it. 2. It is no new thing for God's ark to be thrust into a private house. Christ, and his apostles, preached from house to house, when they could not have public places at command. 3. Sometimes priests are shamed and out-done in religion by common Israelites. (2.) They provided a proper person to attend it. *They sanctified Eleazar his son to keep it;* not the father, either because he was aged and infirm, or because he had the affairs of his house and family to attend, from which they would not take him off; but the son, who it is probable was a very pious devout young man, and zealously affected towards the best things; his business was to keep the ark, not only from being seized by malicious Philistines, but from being touched or looked into by too curious Israelites. He was to keep the room clean and decent in which the ark was, that though it was in an obscure place, it might not look like a neglected thing, which no man looked after. It doth not appear that this Eleazar was of the tribe of Levi, much less of the house of Aaron, nor was it needful that he should, for there was no altar either for sacrifice or incense, only we may suppose, that some devout Israelites would come and pray before the ark, and those that did to he was there ready to attend and assist. For this purpose they sanctified him, i. e. by his own consent they obliged him to make this his business, and to give a constant attendance to it; they set him apart for it in the name of all their citizens. This was irregular, but it was dispensed with, by reason of the present distress. When the ark is but newly come out of captivity, we cannot expect it of a sudden to be in its usual solemnity, but must take things as they are, and make the best of them.

2. Yet we are very loth to leave it here, wishing it well at Shiloh again, but that is made desolate, *Jer. vii. 14.* however wishing it at Nob, or Gibeon, or wherever the tabernacle and altars are; but it seems it must lie by the way for want of some public-spirited men, to bring it to its proper place.

1. The time of its continuance here was long, very long, above forty years it lay in these fields of the wood, a remote obscure private place, unfrequented and almost unregarded, ver. 2. *The time that the ark abode in Kirjath-jearim was long,* even till David fetched it thence. It was very strange, that, of all the time that Samuel governed, the ark was never brought to its place in the holy of holies, an evidence of the decay of holy zeal among them. God suffered it to be so, to punish them for their neglect of the ark when it was in its place; and to shew that the mighty strokes which the institution laid upon the ark was but typical of Christ, and those good things to come, which cannot be moved, *Heb. ix. 23. xii. 27.* It was a just reproach to the priests, that not one of their order was sanctified to keep the ark.

2. Twenty years of this time were passed, before the house of Israel was sensible of the want of the ark. The Septuagint read it, somewhat more clearly than we do; and it was twenty years, and (i. e. when) the whole house of Israel looked up again after the Lord. So long the ark remained in obscurity, and the Israelites were not sensible of the inconvenience, nor ever made an enquiry after it, what was become of it; though, while it was absent from the tabernacle, the token of God's special presence was wanting, nor could they keep the day of atonement, as it should be kept. They were content with the altars without the ark; so easily can formal professors rest satisfied in a road of external performances, without any tokens of God's presence or acceptance. But at length they bethought themselves, and began to lament after the Lord, stirred up to it, it is probable, by the preaching of Samuel, with which an extraordinary working of the Spirit of God let in. A general disposition to repentance and reformation now appears throughout all Israel, and they begin to look unto him whom they had slighted, and to mourn, *Zech. xii. 10.* Dr. Lightfoot thinks, this was a matter and time as remarkable as almost any we read of in scripture; and that that great conversion, *Acts ii. and iii.* is the only parallel to it. Note, 1. Those that know how to value God's ordinances, cannot but reckon it a very lamentable thing to want them. 2. True repentance and conversion begins in lamenting after the Lord; we must be sensible, that by sin we have provoked him to withdraw; and are undone if we continue in a state of distance from him, and be restless till we have recovered his favour, and obtained his gracious returns. It was better with the Israelites, when they wanted the ark, and were lamenting after it, than when they had the ark, and were prying into it, or priding themselves in it. Better see people longing in the scarcity of the means of grace, than loathing in the abundance of them.

3. ¶ And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines. 4. Then the children of Israel did put away Baalim, and Ashtaroth, and served the LORD only. 5. And Samuel said, Gather all Israel to Mizpeh, and I will pray for you unto the LORD. 6. And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the LORD, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the LORD. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh.

We may well wonder where Samuel was, and what he was doing all this while, for we have not had him so much as named till now, since chap. iv. 1. not as if he were unconcerned, but his labours among his people are not mentioned, till there appear the fruit of them. When he perceived that they began to lament after the Lord, he struck while the iron was hot, and two things he endeavoured to do for them, as a faithful servant of God, and a faithful friend to the Israel of God.

1. He endeavoured to separate between them and their idols, for there reformation must begin. He spake to all the house of Israel, ver. 3. going, as it should seem, from place to place, an itinerant preacher; (for we find not that they were gathered together till ver. 5.) and wherever he came this was his exhortation, *If you do indeed return to the Lord, as you seem inclined to do, by your lamentations for your departure from him, and his from you, then know, (1.) That you must renounce and abandon your idols, put away the strange gods, for your God will admit no rival; put them away from you, each one for himself, nay, and put them from among you, do what you can, in your places, to rid them out of the country. Put away Baalim the strange gods, and Ashtaroth the strange goddesses, for they had of them too. Or, Ashtaroth is particularly named, because it was the best-beloved idol, and that which they were most wedded to. Note, True repentance strikes at the darling sin, and will, with a peculiar zeal and resolution, put away that; the sin which most easily besets us. (2.) That you must make a solemn business of returning to God, and do it with a serious consideration and a steadfast resolution, for both are included in preparing the heart, directing, disposing, establishing the heart unto the Lord. (3.) That you must be entire for God, for him and no other, serve him only, else you do not serve him at all, so as to please him. (4.) That this is the only way, and a sure way to prosperity and deliverance. Take this course, and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines; for it was, because you forsook him and served other gods, that he delivered you into their hands. This was the purport of Samuel's preaching, and it had a wonderful good effect; ver. 4. They put away Baalim and Ashtaroth, not only quitted the worship of them, but destroyed their images, demolished their altars, and quite abandoned them; What have we to do any more with idols? Hos. xiv. 8. Isa. xxx. 22.*

2. He endeavoured to engage them for ever to God and his service. Now he had them in a good mind, he did all he could to keep them in it.

1. He summons all Israel, at least by their elders, as their representatives, to meet him at Mizpeh, ver. 5. and there he promised to pray for them. And it was worth while for them to come from the remotest part of the country, to join with Samuel in seeking God's favour. Note, Ministers should pray for those to whom they preach, that God by his grace would make the preaching effectual. And when we come together in religious assemblies, we must remember, that it is as much our business there to join in public prayers, as it is to hear a sermon. He would pray for them, that by the grace of God, they might be parted from their idols, and that then, by the providence of God they might be delivered from the Philistines. Ministers would profit their people more, if they did but pray more for them.

2. They obey his summons, and not only come to the meeting, but conform to the intentions of it, and appear there very well disposed, ver. 6. (1.) They drew water and poured it out before the Lord: signifying, 1. Their humiliation and contrition for sin; owning themselves as water spilt upon the ground, which cannot be gathered up again, 2 Sam. xiv. 14. so mean, so miserable before God, Psal. xxii. 14. the Chaldee reads it, they poured out their hearts in repentance before the Lord. They wept rivers of tears, and sorrowed after a godly sort, for it was before the Lord, and with an eye to him. 2. Their earnest prayers and supplications to God for mercy. The soul is in prayer poured out before God, Psal. lxxii. 8. 2. Their universal reformation; they thus expressed their willingness to part with all their sins, and to retain no more of the relish or favour of them, than the vessel doth of the water that is poured out of it. They were free and full in their confession, and fixed in their resolution to cast away from them all their transgressions. Israel is now baptized from their idols: So Dr. Lightfoot. 4. Some think it signifies their joy in the hope of God's mercy, which Samuel had assured them of. This ceremony was used with that signification at the feast of tabernacles, John vii. 37, 38. and see Isa. xii. 3. Taking it in this sense, it must be read, they drew water after they had fasted. In the close of their humiliation they thus expressed their hope of pardon and reconciliation. (2.) They fasted, abstained from food, afflicted their souls, so expressing repentance and exciting devotion. (3.) They made a public confession, we have sinned against the Lord, so giving glory to God, and taking shame to themselves. And if we thus confess our sins, we shall find our God faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

3. Samuel judged them at that time in Mizpeh, i. e. He assured them, in God's name, of the pardon of their sins upon their repentance, and that God was reconciled to them. It was a judgment of absolution. Or, He received information against those that did not leave their idols, and proceeded against them according to law. Those that would not judge themselves he judged. Or, Now he settled courts of justice among them, and appointed the terms and circuits which he observed afterwards, ver. 16. Now he set those wheels a-going; and whereas before he acted only as a prophet, now he began to act as a magistrate; to prevent their relapsing to those sins which now they seemed to have renounced.

7. And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel: and when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. 8. And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry unto the LORD our God for us, that

he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. 9. ¶ And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering wholly unto the LORD; and Samuel cried unto the LORD for Israel, and the LORD heard him. 10. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel: but the LORD thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. 11. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car. 12. Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.

Here, 1. The Philistines invade Israel, ver. 7. taking umbrage from that general meeting for repentance and prayer, as if it had been a rendezvous for war, and if so, they thought it prudence to keep the war out of their own country. They had no just cause for this suspicion; but those that seek to do mischief to others, will be forward to imagine that others design mischief to them. Now see here, (1.) How evil sometimes seems to come out of good. The religious meeting of the Israelites at Mizpeh, brought trouble upon them from the Philistines, which, perhaps, tempted them to wish they had staid at home, and to blame Samuel for calling them together. But we may be in God's way and yet meet with distress: nay, when sinners begin to repent and reform, they must expect that Satan will muster all his force against them, and set his instruments to work to the utmost, to oppose and discourage them. But, (2.) How good is at length brought out of that evil. Israel could never be threatened more seasonably than at this time, when they were repenting and praying, nor could they have been better prepared to receive the enemy: nor could the Philistines have acted more impolitically for themselves, than to make war upon Israel at this time, when they were making their peace with God; but God permitted them to do it, that he might have an opportunity immediately of crowning his people's reformation with tokens of his favour, and of confirming the words of his messenger, who had assured them, that if they repented God would deliver them out of the hand of the Philistines. Thus he makes man's wrath to praise him, and serves the purposes of his grace to his people, even by the malicious designs of their enemies against them, Mic. iv. 11, 12.

2. Israel sticks close to Samuel, as their best friend, under God, in this distress; though he was no military man, nor ever celebrated as a mighty man of valour; yet being afraid of the Philistines, for whom they thought themselves an unequal match, they engaged Samuel's prayers for them, ver. 8. Cease not to cry unto the Lord our God for us. They were here unarmed, unprepared for war, come together to fast and pray, not to fight; prayers and tears therefore being all the weapons many of them are now furnished with, to these they have recourse. And knowing Samuel to have a great interest in heaven, they earnestly beg of him to improve it for them. They had reason to expect it, because he had promised to pray for them, ver. 5. had promised them deliverance from the Philistines, ver. 3. and they had been observant of him, in all that which he had spoken to them from the Lord. Thus they who sincerely submit to Christ, as their lawgiver and judge, need not doubt of their interest in his intercession. They were very solicitous that Samuel should not cease to pray for them; what military preparations were to be made, they would undertake them, but let him continue instant in prayer, perhaps remembering, that when Moses did but let down his hand never so little, Amalek prevailed. O what a comfort is it to all believers that our great Intercessor above never ceaseth, is never silent, for he always appears in the presence of God for us!

3. Samuel intercedes with God for them, and doth it by sacrifice, ver. 9. He took a sucking lamb and offered it for a burnt-offering, a whole burnt-offering to the Lord, and while the sacrifice was in burning, with the smoke of it his prayers ascended up to heaven for Israel. Observe, 1. He made intercession with a sacrifice. Christ intercedes in the virtue of his satisfaction, and in all our prayers we must have an eye to his great oblation, depending upon that for audience and acceptance. Samuel's sacrifice without his prayer had been an empty shadow, his prayer without the sacrifice had not been so prevalent, but both together teach us, what great things we may expect from God in answer to those prayers which are made with faith in Christ's sacrifice. 2. It was a burnt-offering, which was offered purely for the glory of God, so intimating, that the great plea he relied on in this prayer was taken from the honour of God. Lord, help thy people now for thy name's sake. When we endeavour to give glory to God, we may hope he will in answer to our prayers work for his own glory. 3. It was but one sucking lamb that he offered; for it is the integrity and intention of the heart that God looks at more than the bulk or number of the offerings. This one lamb (typifying the Lamb of God) was more acceptable than thousands of rams or bullocks would have been without faith and prayer. Samuel was no priest, but he was a Levite and a prophet, the case was extraordinary, and what he did was by special direction, and therefore was accepted of God. And justly was this reproach put upon the priests, because they had corrupted themselves.

4. God gave a gracious answer to Samuel's prayer, ver. 9. The Lord heard him. He was himself a Samuel, asked of God, and many a Samuel, many a mercy in answer to prayer God gave him. Sons of prayer should be famous for praying, as Samuel was among them that call upon his name, Psal. xcix. 6. The answer was a real answer, the Philistines were discomfited, ver. 10, 11. totally routed, and that in such a manner as highly magnified the prayer of Samuel, the power of God, and the valour of Israel. (1.) The prayer of Samuel was honoured, for at the very time when he was offering up his sacrifice, and his prayer with it, the battle begun, and turned immediately against the Philistines. Thus while he was yet speaking, God heard, and answered in thunder, Isa. lxv. 24. God shewed that it was Samuel's prayer and sacrifice that he had respect to, and hereby let Israel know, that as in a former engagement with the Philistines he had justly chastised their presumptuous confidence in the presence of the ark, on the shoulders of two profane priests, so now he graciously accepted their humble dependence upon the prayer of faith, from the mouth and heart of a pious prophet. (2.) The power of God was greatly honoured; for he took the work into his own hand, and discomfited them, not with great hail-stones, which would kill them, as Josh. x. 11. but with a great thunder which frightened them, and put them into such terror and consternation that they fainted away, and became a very easy prey to the sword of Israel, before whom being thus confounded, they were smitten. Josephus adds, that the earth quaked under them when first they made the onset, and, in many places, opened and swallowed them up; and that, besides the terror of the thunder,

thunder, their faces and hands were burnt with lightning, which obliged them to shift for themselves by flight. And being thus driven to their heels by the immediate hand of God (whom they feared not so much as they had feared his ark, chap. iv. 7.) then, (3.) Honour was put upon the hosts of Israel, they were made use of for the completing of the victory, and had the pleasure of triumphing over their oppressors, *they pursued the Philistines and smote them*. How soon did they find the benefit of their repentance, and reformation, and return to God! Now they have thus engaged him for them, none of their enemies can stand before them.

5. Samuel erected a thankful memorial of this victory, to the glory of God, and for the encouragement of Israel, ver. 12. he set up an Eben-ezer, the stone of help. If ever the peoples hard hearts should lose the impressions of this providence, this stone would either revive the remembrance of it, and make them thankful, or remain a standing witness against them for their unthankfulness. (1.) The place where this memorial was set up, was the same, where, twenty years before, the Israelites were smitten before the Philistines, for that was beside Eben-ezer, chap. iv. 1. The sin which procured that defeat formerly, being pardoned upon the repentance, the pardon was sealed by this glorious victory in the very same place where they then suffered loss; see *1st* i. 10. (2.) Samuel himself took care to set up this monument; he had been instrumental by prayer to obtain the mercy, and therefore he thought himself in a special manner obliged to make this grateful acknowledgement of it. (3.) The reason he gives for the name is, *hitherto hath the Lord helped us*: in which he speaks thankfully of what was passed, giving the glory of the victory to God only, who had added this to all his former favours; and yet he speaks somewhat doubtfully for the future: *Hitherto things have done well, but what God may yet do with us we know not, that we refer to him; but let us praise him for what he has done*. Note, The beginnings of mercy and deliverance are to be acknowledged by us with thankfulness so far as they go, though it be not completely finished, nay though the issue seem uncertain. *Having obtained help from God, I continue hitherto*, saith blessed Paul, *Acts* xxvi. 22.

13. ¶ So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel: and the hand of the LORD was against the Philistines, all the days of Samuel. 14. And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron even unto Gath, and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines: and there was peace between Israel and the Amorites. 15. And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. 16. And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal, and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places. 17. And his return was to Ramah; for there was his house; and there he judged Israel, and there he built an altar unto the LORD.

We have here a short account of the further good services that Samuel did to Israel. Having parted them from their idols, and brought them home to their God, he had put them into a capacity of receiving further benefits by his ministry. Having prevailed in that, he became in other instances, a great blessing to them; yet writing it himself, he is brief in the relation. We are not told here, but it appears, *2 Chron.* xxxv. 18. that in the days of Samuel the prophet, the people of Israel kept the ordinance of the passover with more than ordinary devotion, notwithstanding the distance of the ark and the desolations of Shiloh. Many good offices no doubt he did for Israel, but here we are only told how instrumental he was.

1. In securing the public peace, ver. 13. *In his days the Philistines came no more into the coast of Israel*, made no inroads or incursions upon them, perceiving that God now fought for Israel, and that his hand was against the Philistines; this kept them in awe, and restrained the remainder of their wrath. Samuel was a protector and deliverer to Israel, not by dint of sword, as Gideon, nor by strength of arm, as Samson, but by the power of prayer to God, and carrying on a work of reformation among the people. Religion and piety are the best securities of a nation.

2. In recovering the public rights, ver. 14. By his influence Israel had the courage to demand the cities which the Philistines had unjustly taken from them, and had long detained; and the Philistines, not daring to contend with one that had so great an interest in heaven, tamely yielded to the demand, and restored (some think) even Ekron and Gath, two of their capital cities, though afterwards they retook them; others think, some small towns that lay from Ekron to Gath, which were forced out of the Philistines hands. This they got by their reformation and religion; they got ground of their enemies, and got forward in their affairs. It is added, *There was peace between Israel and the Amorites*, i. e. the Canaanites, the remains of the natives. Not that Israel made any league with them, but they were quiet, and not so mischievous to Israel as they had sometimes been. *Thus when a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him*, and give him no disturbance, *Prov.* xvi. 17.

3. In administering public justice, ver. 15, 16. *He judged Israel*; as a prophet, he taught them their duty, and reproved them for their sins, for that is call judging, *Ezek.* xx. 4. xxii. 2. Moses judged Israel, when he made them know the statutes of God and his laws, *Exod.* xviii. 16. and thus Samuel judged them to the last, even after Saul was made king; so he promised them then when Saul was inaugurated, chap. xii. 23. *I will not cease to teach you the good and the right way*. As a magistrate, he received appeals from the inferior courts, and gave judgment upon them; tried causes, and determined them; tried prisoners, and acquitted or condemned them according to the law. This he did all his days, till he grew old and past service, and resigned to Saul; and afterwards he exercised authority, when application was made to him; nay he judged even Agag, and Saul himself. But when he was in his prime he rode the circuit, for the convenience of the country; at least that part of it which lay most under his influence. He kept courts at Beth-el, Gilgal, and Mizpeh, all in the tribe of Benjamin; but his constant residence was at Ramah, his father's city, and there he judged Israel, thither they resorted to him from all parts with their complaints, ver. 17.

4. In keeping up the public exercises of religion, for there where he lived he built an altar to the Lord, not in contempt of the altar that was at Nob, or Gibeon, or wherever the tabernacle was; but divine justice having laid Shiloh waste, and no other place being yet chosen for them to bring their offerings to, *Deut.* xii. 11. he looked upon the law, which obliged them to one place, to be for the present suspended, and therefore

being a prophet, and under divine direction, he did, as the patriarchs did, build an altar where he lived, both for the use of his own family, and for the good of the country that resorted to it. Great men should use their wealth, power and interest, for the keeping up of religion in the places where they live.

C H A P. VIII.

Things went so very well with Israel, in the chapter before, under Samuel's administration, that methinks, it is a pity to find him so quickly, as we do in this chapter, old, and going off, and things working towards a revolution. But so it is; Israel's good days seldom continue long. We have here, (1.) Samuel decaying, ver. 1. (2.) His sons degenerating, ver. 2, 3. (3.) Israel discontented at the present government, and fond to see a change. For, 1. They petition Samuel to set a king over them, ver. 4, 5. 2. Samuel brings the matter to God, ver. 6. 3. God directs him what answer to give them, by way of reproof, ver. 7, 8. And by way of remonstrance, setting forth the consequences of a change of the government, and how uneasy they would soon be under it, ver. 9—18. 4. They insist upon their petition, ver. 19, 20. 5. Samuel promiseth them from God, that they should shortly be gratified, ver. 21, 22. Thus is it hard for people to know when they are well.

1. **A**ND it came to pass when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel. 2. Now the name of his first born was Joel, and the name of his second, Abiah: they were judges in Beer-sheba. 3. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.

Two sad things we find here, but not strange things.

1. A good and useful man growing old and unfit for service, ver. 1. *Samuel was old*, and could not judge Israel as he had done. He is not reckoned to be past sixty years of age now, perhaps not so much; but he was a man betimes, was full of thoughts and cares when he was a child, which, perhaps, hastened the infirmities of age upon him; the fruits that are first ripe, keep the worst. He had spent his strength and spirits in the fatigue of public business, and now, if he think to shake himself as at other times, he finds he is mistaken, old age has cut his hair. Those that are in the prime of their time, ought to be busy in doing the work of life; for as they grow into years, they will find themselves less disposed to it, and less able for it.

2. The children of a good man going to naught, and not treading in his steps. Samuel had given his sons so good an education, and they had given him such good hopes of their doing well, and gained such a reputation in Israel, that he made them judges, assistants to him awhile, and afterwards deputies under him at Beer-sheba, which lay remote from Ramah, ver. 2. Probably the southern countries petitioned for their residence there, that they might not be necessitated to travel far with their causes; we have reason to think, Samuel gave them their commissions, not because they were his sons, he had no ambition to entail the government upon his family, no more than Gideon, but because, for ought appeared yet, they were very fit men for the trust; and none so proper to ease the aged judge, and take some of the burden off him, as (*ceteris paribus*) his own sons, who, no doubt, were respected for their good father's sake, and having such an advantage at setting out, might soon have been great, if they had been but good. But alas! *his sons walked not in his ways*, ver. 3. and when their character was the reverse, their relation to so good a man, which otherwise had been their honour, was really their disgrace. *Degenerati genus opprobrium*. Note, Those that have the most grace themselves, cannot give grace to their children. It has often been the grief of good men to see their posterity, instead of treading in their steps, trampling upon them, and, as Job speaks, *marring their path*. Nay, many that have begun well, promised fair, and set out in the right paths, so that their parents and friends have had great hopes of them, yet afterwards have turned aside to by-paths, and been the grief of those whose joy they should have been. When Samuel's sons were made judges, and settled at a distance from him, then they discovered themselves. Thus, (1.) Many that have been well educated, and have carried themselves well while under their parents eye, when they have gone abroad into the world, and set up for themselves, have proved bad. Let none therefore be secure, either of themselves or theirs, but depend on divine grace. (2.) Many that have done well in a state of meanness and subjection, have been spoiled by preferment and power. Honours change mens minds, and too often for the worse. It doth not appear that Samuel's sons were so profane as Eli's sons, but whatever they were in other respects, they were corrupt judges, they turned aside after lucre, after the mammon of unrighteousness, so the Chaldee reads it. Note, *The love of money is the root of all evil*. It is pernicious in any, but especially in judges. Samuel had taken no bribes, chap. xii. 3. but his sons did, though no doubt he warned them against it when he made them judges; and then they perverted judgment, in determining controversies, had an eye to the bribe, not to the law, and enquired who bid highest, not who had right on his side. It is sad with a people, when the public justice that should do them right, being perverted, doth them the greatest wrong.

4. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah. 5. And said unto him, Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. 6. ¶ But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us: and Samuel prayed unto the LORD. 7. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. 8. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods: so do they also unto thee. 9. Now therefore hearken unto their voice:

voice: howbeit, yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them. 10. ¶ And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people, that asked of him a king. 11. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen, and some shall run before his chariots. 12. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. 13. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. 14. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive-yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. 15. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. 16. And he will take your men-servants, and your maid-servants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. 17. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. 18. And ye shall cry out in that day, because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. 19. ¶ Nevertheless, the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel: and they said, Nay, but we will have a king over us: 20. That we may also be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. 21. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD. 22. And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel, Go ye every man unto his city.

We have here the starting of a matter perfectly new and surprising, which was the setting up of kingly government in Israel. Perhaps the thing had been often talked of among them, by those that were given to change, and affected that which looked great. But we do not find, that it was ever till now publicly proposed and debated: Abimelech was little better than a titular king, though he be said to reign over Israel, *Judges ix.* 22. and perhaps, his fall had for a great while rendered the title of king odious in Israel, as that of Tarquinus did among the Romans; but if it had, by this time the odium was worn off, and some bold steps are here taken towards so great a revolution as that amounted to. Here is,

1. The address of the elders to Samuel in this matter, *ver. 4, 5.* They gathered themselves together, by common consent, and not in a riotous tumultuous manner, but with respect due to his character, they came to him at his house at Ramah with their address; which contained,

(1.) A remonstrance of their grievances; in short, *Thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways.* Many a fairer occasion that people had had to ask a king, when they were oppressed by their neighbours, or embroiled at home, for want of a king in Israel, but a small thing will serve factious spirits for a colour to desire a change. 1. It was true that Samuel was old; but if that made him the less able to ride the circuit, and sit long on the bench, yet it made him the more wise and experienced, and upon that account the fitter to rule. If he was old, was he not grown old in their service? And it was very unkind, ungrateful, nay, and unjust, to cast him off when he was old, who had spent his days in doing them good. God had saved his youth from being despicable, *chap. iii.* 20. yet they make his old age so, which should have been counted worthy of double honour. If old people be upbraided with their infirmities, and laid aside for them, let them not think it strange, Samuel himself was so. 2. It is true that his sons did not walk in his ways; the more was his grief, but they could not say it was his fault, he had not, like Eli, indulged them in their badness, but was ready to receive complaints against them: And if that had been the thing desired, we may well suppose, upon the making out of the charge of bribery against them, he would have superseded their commissions and punished them. But this would not content the elders of Israel, they had another project in their head.

(2.) A petition for the redress of this grievance, by setting a king over them: *Make us a king to judge us like all the nations.* Thus far it was well that they did not rise up in rebellion against Samuel, and set up a king for themselves, *vi & armis*; but they applied themselves to Samuel, God's prophet, and humbly begged of him to do it. But it appears by what follows that it was an ill motion and ill made, and was displeasing to God. God designed them a king, a man after his own heart, when Samuel was dead, but they would anticipate God's counsel, and would have one now Samuel was old. They had a prophet to judge them, that had immediate correspondence with heaven, and therein they were great and happy above any nation, none having God so nigh unto them as they had, *Deut. iv.* 7. But this would not serve, they must have a king to judge them with external pomp and power, like *all the nations.* A poor prophet in a manile, though conversant in the visions of the Almighty, looked mean in their eyes, who judged by outward appearance; but a king in a purple robe, with his guards and officers of state, would look great; and such a one they must have. They knew it was in vain to court Samuel to take upon him the title and dignity of a king, but he must appoint them one. They do not say, give us a king that is wise and good, and will judge better than thy sons do, but give us a king, any body that will but make a figure. Thus foolishly did they forsake their own mercies, and under pretence of advancing the dignity of their nation to that of their neighbours, did really thrust themselves down from their own excellency, and profane their crown by casting it to the ground.

2. Samuel's resentment of this insult, *ver. 6.* Let us see how he took it: 1. It cut him to the heart. Probably it was a surprise to him, and he had not any intimation before of their design, which made it the more grievous. The thing displeased Samuel, not when they upbraided him with his own infirmities, and his children's irregularities, he could patiently bear what re-

flected on himself and his own family, but it displeased him when they said, *Give us a king to judge us*, because that reflected upon God and his honour. 2. It drove him to his knees; he gave them no answer for the present, but took time to consider of what they proposed, and prayed unto the Lord for direction what to do, spreading the case before him, and leaving it with him, and so making himself easy. Samuel was a man much in prayer, and we are encouraged in every thing to make our requests known to God, *Phil. iv.* 6. When any thing disturbs us, it is our interest as well as duty to shew before God our trouble, and he gives us leave to be humbly free with him.

3. The instructions God gave him concerning this matter. They that in straits seek to God, shall find him nigh unto them, and ready to direct them. He tells him,

1. That which would be an allay to his displeasure. Samuel was much disturbed at the motion, it troubled him mightily to see his prophetic office thus slighted, and all the good turns he had done to Israel, thus ungratefully returned; but God tells him, he must not think it either hard or strange. (1.) He must not think it hard, that they had put this slight upon him, for they had herein put a slight upon God himself. *They have not rejected thee only, they have rejected me*, I share with thee in the affront, *ver. 7.* Note, If God interest himself in the indignities that are done us, and the contempts that are put upon us, we may well afford to bear them patiently; nor need we think the worse of ourselves, if for his sake we bear reproach, *Psalm lxxix.* 7. but rather rejoice, and count it an honour, *Col. i.* 24. Samuel must not complain that they were weary of his government, though just and gentle, for really they were weary of God's government; that was it they disliked: *They have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.* God reigns over the heathen, *Psalm xlviii.* 8. over all the world, but the government of Israel had hitherto been, in a more peculiar manner, than ever any government was a Theocracy, a divine government, their judges had their call and commission immediately from God, the affairs of the nation were under his peculiar conduct. As the constitution, so the administration of their government, was by, *Thus saith the Lord*; this method they were weary of, though it was their honour and safety, above any thing, so long as they kept in with God, they were indeed so much the more exposed to calamities, if they provoked God to anger by sin, and found they could not transgress at so cheap a rate as other nations could, which, perhaps, was the true reason, why they desired to stand upon the same terms with God that other nations did. (2.) He must not think it strange, nor marvel at the matter, for they do as they always have done, *ver. 8.* According to all the works which they have done, since the day that I brought them out of Egypt, so do they unto thee. They had at first been so very respectful and obsequious to Samuel, that he began to hope they were cured of their old stubborn disposition; but now he found himself deceived in them, and must not be surprised at it. They had always been rude to their governors, witness Moses and Aaron; nay, *They have forsaken me, and served other gods*; the greatness of their crime, in affecting new gods, may make this crime of affecting new governors, seem little. Samuel might expect they would deal treacherously, for they were called transgressors from the womb, *Isa. xlviii.* 8. This had been their manner from their youth up, *Jer. xxii.* 21.

2. He tells him that which would be an answer to their demand. Samuel would not have known what to say, if God had not instructed him. Should he oppose the motion it would speak a greater fondness of power and dominion than did become a prophet, and an indulgence of his sons: Should he yield to the motion, it would look like the betraying of his trust, and he would become accessory to the ill consequences of a change. Aaron sinned in gratifying the people, when they said, *Make us gods*, he dares not therefore comply with them, when they say, *Make us a king*; but he gives them, with assurance, the answer God sent them.

1. He must tell them, that they shall have a king. Hearken to the voice of the people, *ver. 7.* and again, *ver. 9.* Not that God was pleased with their request, but as sometimes he crosseth us in love, to at other times he gratifieth us in wrath; he did so here. When they said, *give us a king and princes, he gave them a king in his anger.* See *Hos. xiii.* 10, 11. as he gave quails, *Psalm cvi.* 15. *lxviii.* 29. God bid Samuel humour them in this matter, (1.) That they might be beaten with their own rod, and might feel to their cost, the difference between his government, and the government of a king; see *2 Chron. xii.* 8. It soon appeared how much worse their condition was, in all respects, under Saul, than it had been under Samuel. (2.) To prevent something worse. If they were not gratified, they would either rise in rebellion against Samuel, or universally revolt from their religion, and admit the gods of the nations, that they might have kings like them. Rather than so, let them have a king. (3.) God knows how to bring glory to himself, out of it, and serve his own wise purposes, even by their foolish counsels.

2. But he must tell them withal, that when they have a king, they will soon have enough of him, and will, when it is too late, repent of their choice. This he must protest solemnly to them, *ver. 9.* That, if they would have a king to rule them, as the Eastern kings ruled their subjects, they would find the yoke exceeding heavy. They looked only at the pomp and magnificence of a king, and thought that would make their nation great and considerable among its neighbours, and would strike a terror upon their enemies; but he must bid them consider, how they would like to bear the charges of that pomp, and how they would endure that arbitrary power, which the neighbouring kings assumed. Note, Those that set their hearts inordinately upon any thing in this world, for the moderating of their desires, ought to consider the inconveniences, as well as conveniences that will attend it, and to set the one over against the other in their thoughts. Those that submit themselves to the government of the world and the flesh are told plainly, what hard masters they are, and what a tyranny the dominion of sin is, and yet they exchange God's government for it.

4. Samuel's faithful delivery of God's mind to them, *ver. 10.* He told them all the words of the Lord, how ill he resented it; that he construed it as rejecting of him, and compared it with their serving other gods. That he would grant their request, if they insisted on it; but withal had ordered him to represent to them the certain consequences of their choice, that they would be such as if they had reason left them, and would allow themselves to consult their own interest, they would withdraw their petition, and beg to continue as they were. Accordingly he lays before them, very particularly, what would be, not the right of a king in general, but the manner of the king that shall reign over them, according to the pattern of the nations, *ver. 11.* Samuel doth not speak (as Bishop Patrick expounds it) of a just and honest right of a king to do these things, for his right is quite otherwise described, in that part of Moses's law, which concerns the king's duty, but such a right as the kings of the nations had then acquired. *This shall be the manner of the king, i. e.* 1. Thus he must support his dignity, at the expence of that which is dearest to you. 2. Thus he will abuse his power, as those that have power are apt to do; and having the militia in his hand, you will be under a necessity of submitting to him.

If they will have such a king as the nations have; let them consider, (1.) That king must have a great retinue, abundance of servants to wait on him,

him, grooms to look after his chariots and horses, gentlemen to ride about with him, and footmen to run before his chariots. This is the chief grandeur of princes, and the imaginary glory of great men, to have a multitude of attendants: And whence must we have those? why, he will take your sons, that are free-born, have a liberal education, and whom you now have at your own dispose, and will appoint them for himself, *ver. 11.* They must wait upon him, and be at his beck; they that used to work for their parents and themselves, must work for him, *ear his ground, and reap his harvest, ver. 12.* and count it their preferment too, *ver. 16.* This would be a great change.

(2.) He must keep a great table; he will not be content to dine with his neighbours upon a sacrifice, as Samuel used to do, *chap. ix. 13.* but he must have a variety of dainty dishes, forced meats, and sweet-meats and delicate sauces: and who must prepare him these? why, he will take your daughters, the most ingenious and handy of them, whom you hoped to prefer to houses and tables of their own; and, whether you be willing or no, they must be his confidaries, and cooks, and bakers, and the like.

(3.) He must needs have a standing army, for guards and garrisons, and your sons, instead of being elders of your cities, and living in quiet and honour at home, must be captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and must be disposed of at the pleasure of the sovereign.

(4.) You may expect that he will have great favourites, whom, having dignified and ennobled, he must enrich, and give them estates suitable to their honour: and which way can he do that, but out of your inheritances, *ver. 14.* He will take your fields and vineyards, which descended to you from your ancestors, and which you hoped to have left to your posterity after you, *even the best of them;* and will not only take them to himself, you could bear that the better, but he will give them to his servants, who will be your masters, and bear rule over that for which you have laboured: How will you like that?

(5.) He must have great revenues to maintain his port and power with; whence must he have them but from you. He will take the tenth of the fruits of your ground, *ver. 15.* and your cattle, *ver. 17.* You think the tenths, the double tenths, which the law of God has appointed for the support of the church, grievous enough, and grudge the payment of them; but, if you have a king, there must issue another tenth out of your estates, which will be levied more rigorously for the support of the royal dignity. Consider the expence with the magnificence, and whether it will quit cost.

Those would be their grievances, and, (1.) They would have none but God to complain to. Once they complained to the prince himself, and were answered, according to the manner of the king, *your yoke is heavy; and I will add to it,* 1 Kings xii. 11. (2.) When they complained to God, he would not hear them, *ver. 18.* nor could they expect that he should, both because they had been deaf to his calls and admonitions, and this trouble, in particular, they had brought upon themselves, by rejecting him, and would not believe, when he told them what would come of it. Note, When we bring ourselves into distress by our own irregular desires and projects, we justly forfeit the comfort of prayer, and the benefit of divine aids, and, if God be no better to us than we deserve, must have our relief in our own hands, and then it is bad with us.

5. The peoples obstinacy in their demand, *ver. 19, 20.* One would think, such a representation of the consequences, as this was, coming from God himself, who can neither deceive by his word, nor be deceived in his knowledge, should have prevailed with them to waive their request: but their hearts were upon it, right or wrong, good or evil, *we will have a king over us,* whatever God or Samuel say to the contrary; we will have a king, whatever it costs us, and whatever inconvenience we bring upon ourselves or our posterity by it. See their folly. 1. They were quite deaf to reason, and blind to their own interest. They could not answer Samuel's arguments against it, nor deny the force of them, and yet they grow more violent in their request, and more insolent. Before it was, *pray make us a king,* now it is, *ay, but we will have a king;* yea, that we will, because we will? nor will we bear to have any thing said against it. See the absurdity of inordinate desires, and how they rob men of their reason. 2. They could not stay God's time. God had intimated to them in the law, that, in due time, Israel should have a king, *Deut. xvii. 15.* and perhaps, they had some intimation, that the time was at hand; but they are all in haste, we in our day will have this king over us. Could they but have waited ten or twelve years longer, they had had David, a king of God's giving in mercy, and all the calamities that attended the setting up of Saul had been prevented. Sudden resolves and hasty desires make work for a long and leisurely repentance. 3. That which they aimed at in desiring a king, was not only, as before, that they might be like the nations, and levelled with them, above whom God had so far advanced them; but that they might have one to judge them, and to go out before them, when they took the field, and to fight their battles. Foolish people and unwise! Could they ever desire a battle better fought for them than the last was, by Samuel's prayers, and God's thunder? *chap. vii. 10.* Was victory hereby too sure to them? and were they fond to try the chance of war at the same uncertainty that others did? It seems, so sick they are of their privileges: and what was the issue? Their first king was slain in a battle, which none of their judges ever were; so was Josiah, one of the last and best.

6. The dismissing of them with an intimation, that very shortly they should have what they asked. (1.) Samuel rehearsed all their words in the ears of the Lord, *ver. 21.* Not but that God perfectly knew it, without Samuel's report; but thus he dealt faithfully between God and Israel, as a prophet, returning the answer to him that sent him; and thus he waited on God for farther direction. God is fully acquainted with the state of the case we are in care and doubt about, but he will know it from us. His rehearsing it in the ears of the Lord, intimates, that it was done in private for the people were not disposed to join with him in prayer to God for direction in this matter: also, it speaks a holy familiarity, to which God graciously admits his people; they speak in the ears of the Lord, as one friend whispers with another; their communion with God is *meat they have to eat,* which the world knows not of, John iv. 32. (2.) God gave directions that they should have a king, since they were so inordinately set upon it, *ver. 22.* Make them a king, and let them make their best of him, and thank themselves, if that very pomp and power, which they are so eager to see in their sovereign, be their plague and burden. So he gave them up to their own hearts lust. Samuel told them this, but sent them home for the present every man to his city, for the designation of the person must be left to God, they had now no more to do. When God saw fit to notify the choice to Samuel, they should hear further from him, in the mean time let them keep the peace, and expect the issue.

C H A P. IX.

Samuel had promised Israel, from God, that they should have a king; it is strange, that the next news is not of candidates setting up for
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the government, making an interest in the people, or recommending themselves to Samuel, and, by him, to God, to be put in nomination. Why doth not the prince of the tribe of Judah, whoever he is, look about him now, remembering Jacob's entail of the sceptre on that tribe? Is there never a bold aspiring man in Israel, I say, I will be king, if God will choose me? No, none appears, whether it is owing to a culpable mean spiritedness, or a laudable humility, I know not; but sure it is what can scarce be paralleled in the history of any kingdom; a crown, such a crown, set up, and nobody bids for it. Most governments began in the ambition of the prince to rule, but Israel's in the ambition of the people to be ruled. Had any of those elders, which petitioned for a king, afterwards petitioned to be king, I should have suspected the person's ambition to have been at the bottom of the motion: but now (let them have the praise of what was good in them, it was not so much) God having, in the l. c., undertaken to choose their king, *Deut. xvii. 15.* they all sit still, till they hear from heaven; and that they do in this chapter, which begins the story of Saul, their first king, and, by strange slips of providence, brings him to Samuel to be anointed privately, and so to be prepared for an election by lot, and a public commendation to the people, which follows in the next chapter. Here is, 1. A short account of Saul's parentage and person, *ver. 1, 2.* 2. A large and particular account of the bringing him to Samuel, to whom he had been before altogether a stranger. (1.) God, by revelation, had bid Samuel expect him, *ver. 15, 16.* (2.) God, by providence, led him to Samuel, 1. Being sent to seek his father's asses, he was at a loss, *ver. 3—5.* 2. By the advice of his servant, he determined to consult Samuel, *ver. 6—10.* 3. By the direction of the young maidens, he found him out, *ver. 11—14.* 4. Samuel, being informed of God concerning him, *ver. 17.* treated him with respect in the gate, *ver. 18—21.* in the dining-room, *ver. 22—24.* and at length in private, where he prepared him to hear the surprising news that he must be king, *ver. 25—27.* And these beginnings had been very hopeful and promising, if it had not been, that the sin of the people was the spring of this great affair.

1. NOW there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. 2. And he had a son, whose name was Saul, a choice young man, and a goodly; and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward, he was higher than any of the people.

We are here told,

1. What a good family Saul was of, *ver. 2.* He was of the tribe of Benjamin; so was the New Testament Saul, who also was called Paul, and he mentions it as his honour, for Benjamin was a favourite, *Rom. xi. 1.* *Phil. iii. 5.* That tribe had been reduced to a very small number by the fatal war with Gibeah, and much ado there was to provide wives for those six hundred men that were the poor remains of it out of that diminished tribe, which is here called, with good reason, the smallest of the tribes of Israel, *ver. 21.* Saul sprang as a root out of a dry ground. That tribe, though fewest in number, was first in dignity, *God giving more abundant honour to that part which lacked,* 1 Cor. xii. 24. His father was Kish, a mighty man of power, or, as the margin reads it, in substance; in spirit stout, in body strong, in estate wealthy. The whole lot of the tribe of Benjamin coming to be distributed among six hundred men, we may suppose, their inheritances were much larger than theirs who were of other tribes; an advantage which somewhat helped to balance the disadvantage of the smallness of their number.

2. What a good figure Saul made, *ver. 2.* No mention is here made of his wisdom or virtue, his learning or piety, or any of the accomplishments of his mind, but that he was a tall, proper, handsome man, that had a good face, a good shape, and a good presence, graceful and well-proportioned, among all the children of Israel there was not a goodlier person than he; and, as if nature had marked him for pre-eminence and superiority, he was taller, by the head and shoulders, than of the people, the fitter to be a match for the giants of Gath, the champions of the Philistines. When God chose a king after his own heart, he pitched upon one that was not at all remarkable for the height of his stature, nor any thing in his countenance, but the innocency and sweetness that appeared there, *chap. xvi. 7, 12.* But when he chose a king after the peoples heart, who aimed at nothing so much as stateliness and grandeur, he pitched upon this huge tall man, that, if he had no other good qualities, yet he would look great. It doth not appear, that he excelled in strength, so much as he did in stature; Samson did, and him they slighted, bound, and betrayed into the hands of the Philistines; justly therefore are they now put off with one, who though of uncommon height, is weak as other men. They would have a king like the nations, and the nations commonly chose portly men for their kings.

3. And the asses of Kish, Saul's father, were lost; and Kish said to Saul his son, Take now one of the servants with thee, and arise, go seek the asses. 4. And he passed through mount Ephraim, and passed through the land of Shalisha, but they found them not: then they passed through the land of Shalim, and there they were not: and he passed through the land of the Benjamites, but they found them not. 5. And when they were come to the land of Zuph, Saul said to his servant that was with him, Come, and let us return; lest my father leave caring for the asses, and take thought for us. 6. And he said unto him, Behold now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honourable man; all that he saith cometh surely to pass: now let us go thither; peradventure he can shew us our way that we should go. 7. Then said Saul to his servant, But behold, if we go, what shall we bring the man? for the bread is spent in our vessels, and there is not a present

to bring to the man of God: what have we? 8. And the servant answered Saul again, and said, Behold, I have here at hand the fourth part of a shekel of silver: *that* will I give to the man of God, to tell us our way. 9. (Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to enquire of God, thus he spake, Come, and let us go to the seer: for *he that is now called* a Prophet, was beforetime called a Seer.) 10. Then said Saul to his servant, Well said, come, let us go: so they went unto the city where the man of God was.

Here is, 1. A great man rising from a small beginning. It doth not appear that Saul had any preferment at all, or was in any post of honour or trust, till he was chosen king of Israel. Most that are advanced rise gradually, but Saul, from the level with his neighbours, stepped at once into the throne, according to that of Hannah, he *raiseth up the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes*, 1 Sam. ii. 8. Saul, it should seem, though he was himself married, and had children grown up, yet lived in his father's house, and was subject to him. Promotion comes not by chance, nor human probabilities, but God is the judge.

2. A great event rising from small occurrences. How low doth the history begin! Being to trace Saul to the crown, we find him first employed as meanly as any we meet with called out to preferment.

1. Saul's father sends him, with one of his servants, to seek some asses that he had lost. It may be, they had no way then to give public notice of such a number of asses strayed or stolen out of the grounds of Kish the Benjamite. A very good law they had to oblige men to bring back an ox or an ass that went astray, but it is to be feared, that was, as other good laws, neglected and forgotten. It is easy to observe here, that they that have, must expect to lose; that it is wisdom to look after what is lost; that no man should think it below him to know the state of his stocks; that children should be forward to serve their parents interests; Saul readily went to seek his father's asses, ver. 3, 4. His taking care of the asses is to be ascribed, not so much to the humility of his spirit, as to the plainness and simplicity of those times. But his obedience to his father in it was very commendable. *Seekest thou a man diligent in his business*, and dutiful to his superiors, willing to stoop, and willing to take pains; he doth, as Saul, stand fair for preferment. The servant of Kish would be faithful only as a servant, but Saul as a son, in his own business, and therefore he sent him. Saul and his servant travelled far on foot, it is likely, in quest of the asses, but in vain, they found them not. He missed of what he sought, but had no reason to complain of the disappointment, for he met with the kingdom which he never dreamed of.

2. When he could not find them, he determined to return to his father, ver. 5. in consideration of his father's tender concern for him, being apprehensive, that if they staid out any longer, the old gentleman would begin to fear, as Jacob concerning Joseph, that an evil beast had devoured them, or some mischief had befallen them; he will *leave caring for the asses*, as much as he was in care about them, and *will take thought for us*. Children should take care that they do nothing to grieve or frighten their parents, but be tender of their tenderness.

3. His servant moved, (for it should seem, he had more religion in him than his master) that since they were now at Ramah, they should call of Samuel, and take his advice in this mighty affair, Observe here,

1. They were close by the city where Samuel lived, and that put it into their heads to consult him, ver. 6. *there is in this city a man of God*. Note, Wherever we are, we should improve our opportunities of acquainting ourselves with those that are wise and good. But there are many that will consult a man of God, if he comes in their way, that would not go a step out of their way to get wisdom.

2. The servant spoke very respectfully concerning Samuel, though he had no personal knowledge of him, but by common fame only. *He is a man of God, and an honourable man*. Note, Men of God are honourable men, and should be so in our eyes. Acquaintance with the things of God, and serviceableness to the kingdom of God, puts true honour upon men, and makes them great. This was the honour of Samuel, as a man of God, that *all he saith cometh surely to pass*. This was observed concerning him, when he was a young prophet, chap. iii. 19. *God did let none of his words fall to the ground*; and still it held true.

3. They agreed to advise with him concerning the way that they should go; *peradventure he can shew us*. All the use they would make of the man of God was, to be advised by him, whether they should return home, or, if there was yet any hopes of finding the asses, which way they must go next; A poor business to employ a prophet about! Had they said, Let us give up the asses for lost; and now we are so near the man of God, let us go and learn from him the good knowledge of God; let us consult him how we may order our conversations aright, and inquire the law at his mouth, since we may not have such another opportunity, and then we shall not lose our journey; the proposal had been such as became Israelites: but to make prophecy, that glory of Israel, serve so mean a turn as this, discovered too much what manner of spirits they were of. Note, Most people would rather be told their fortune, than told their duty; how to be rich, than how to be saved. If it were the business of the men of God to direct for the recovery of lost asses, they would be consulted much more than they are now it is their business to direct for the recovery of lost souls: so preposterous is the care of the most of men!

4. Saul was thoughtful what present they should bring to the man of God, what fee they should give him for his advice, ver. 7. *What shall we bring the man?* They could not present him, as Jeroboam's wife did Ahijah with loaves and cakes, 1 Kings xiv. 3. for their bread was spent; but the servant bethought himself, that he had in his pocket the fourth part of a shekel, about seven pence halfpenny in value, and that he would give to the man of God to direct them, ver. 8. That will do, saith Saul, *Let us go*, ver. 10. Some think, when Saul talked of giving Samuel a fee, he measured him by himself, or by his sons, as if he must be hired to do an honest Israelite a kindness, and were like the false prophets, that *divined for money*, Mic. iii. 11. He came to him as a fortune teller, rather than as a prophet; and therefore thought the fourth part of a shekel was enough to give him. But it rather seems to be agreeable to the general usage of those times, as it is to natural equity, that those who sowed spiritual things, should reap not only eternal things, from him that employs them, but temporal things, from those for whom they are employed. Samuel needed 1. not their money; nor would he have denied them his advice, if they had not brought it; it is probable, when he had it, he gave it to the poor: but they brought it to him as a token of their respect, and the value they put upon his office. Nor did he refuse it, for they were able to give it; and though it was but a little, it was as the widow's mite. But Saul, as he never thought of going to the man of God till the servant proposed it, so it should

seem he mentioned the want of a present, as an objection against their going, would not own that he had money in his pocket, but when the servant generously offered to be at the charge, then, Well said, saith Saul, come, let us go. Most people love a cheap religion, and like it best, when they can devolve the expence of it to others.

5. The historian here takes notice of the name then given to the prophets, they called them *seers*, or seeing men, ver. 9. not but that the name prophet was then used, and applied to such persons, but that of seers was more in use. Note, those that are prophets must first be seers; they who undertake to speak to others of the things of God, must have an insight into those things themselves.

11. ¶ And as they went up the hill to the city, they found young maidens going out to draw water, and said unto them, Is the seer here? 12. And they answered them, and said, He is; behold, *he is before you*: make haste now, for he came to day to the city; for *there is a sacrifice*, of the people to day in the high place. 13. As soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice, *and afterwards* they eat that he be bidden. Now therefore get ye up, for about this time ye shall find him. 14. And they went up into the city: *and when they were come into the city, behold, Samuel came out against them*, for to go up to the high place. 15. ¶ Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, 16. To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him *to be captain over my people* Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me. 17. And when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of: this same shall reign over my people.

Here, 1. Saul, by an ordinary enquiry, is directed to Samuel, ver. 11—14. Gibeah of Saul was not twenty miles from Ramah where Samuel dwelt, and was near to Mizpeh where he often judged Israel, and yet it seems, Saul had lived so very privately, and had taken so little notice of public affairs, that he had never seen Samuel, for when he met him, ver. 18. he did not know him, so that there was no cause to suspect any secret compact or collusion between them in this matter. *I knew him not*, saith John Baptist concerning Christ. John i. 31. Yet I do not think it any commendation to Saul, that he was a stranger to Samuel. However, the maid-servants of Ramah, whom they met with at all the places of drawing water, could give him and his servant intelligence concerning Samuel; and very particular they were in their directions, ver. 12, 13. We should always be ready to give what assistance we can to those that are enquiring after God's prophets, and further them in their enquiries.

Even the maid-servants could tell them, (2.) That there was a sacrifice that day in the high-place, it being either an ordinary festival, or an extraordinary day of prayer and thanksgiving, with which sacrifices were joined. The tabernacle being deprived of the ark, the altar there had not now the reputation it formerly had, nor were they tied to it, as they would be when God had again chosen a place to put his name in, and therefore now other places were allowed. Samuel had built an altar at Ramah, chap. vii. 17. and here we have him making use of that altar. (2.) That Samuel came that day to the city, either from his circuit, or from his country seat. He was such a public person, that his motions were generally known. (3.) That this was just the time of their meeting to feast before the Lord upon the sacrifice; about this time you will find him in the street going up to the high place. They knew the hour of the solemn feast. (4.) That the people would not eat till Samuel came, not only because he was the worthiest person, and they ought in good manners to stay for him, and he was, as some think, the maker of the feast, the sacrifice being offered at his charge and upon his account; but because as a man of God, whoever made the feast he must bless the sacrifice, *i. e.* those parts of the sacrifice which they feasted upon; and which may be considered, 1. As a common meal, and so this is an instance of that great duty of craving a blessing upon our meat before we partake of it. We cannot expect benefit by our food without that blessing, and we have no reason to expect that blessing if we do not pray for it. Thus we may give glory to God as our benefactor, and own our dependence upon him, and our obligations to him. Or, (2.) As a religious assembly. When the sacrifice was offered, which was the ceremony, Samuel blessed it, *i. e.* he prayed over it, and offered up spiritual sacrifices with it, which were the substance; and afterwards, when the holy duties were performed, they did eat. Let the soul first be served. The feast upon the sacrifice being a sacred rite, it was requisite that should in a particular manner be blessed, as is the Christian eucharist: They feasted in token of their reconciliation to God by virtue of the sacrifice, and their participation of the benefits of it; and Samuel blessed it, *i. e.* he prayed to God to grace the solemnity with his special presence, that it might answer those great ends.

Bishop Hall observes, what a particular account those maid-servants could give of the usage of those sacred feasts, and infers from it, That, "where there is practice and example of piety in the better sort, there will be a reflection of it upon the meanest. It is no small advantage to live in religious places; for we shall be much to blame if all goodness fall beside us."

Saul and his servant followed the directions given them, and very opportunely met Samuel going to the high-place, the synagogue of the city, ver. 14. This seemed purely accidental, but the divine providence ordered it, for the forwarding of this great event. The wife God serves very great and certain purposes, by very small and casual occurrences. A sparrow lights not on the ground without our Father.

2. Samuel by an extraordinary revelation, is informed concerning Saul. He was a Seer, and therefore must see this in a way peculiar to himself.

1. God had told him the day before, that he would at this time, send him the man that should serve the people of Israel for such a king as they wished to have *like all the nations*, ver. 15, 16. He told him in his ear, *i. e.* privately by a secret whisper to his mind, or, perhaps, by a still small voice, some

some soft and gentle sounds conveyed to his ear, probably when he was praying in secret for direction in that and other affairs of the nation. He had spoken in the ears of the Lord, chap. vii. 21. and now God spoke in his ear, in token of friendship and familiarity, for he revealeth his secret to his servants the prophets, as secrets in their ear, Amos iii. 7. God told him before that it might not be a surprise to him; and, perhaps, it was in expectation of it, that he appointed the feast and the sacrifice, for the imploring of God's blessing upon this great and important affair, though he might keep the particular occasion in his own breast, God having only told it him in his ear. The Hebrew phrase is, *He uncovered the ear of Samuel*; to which some allude, for the explication of the way of God's revealing himself to us; he not only speaks but *uncovers our ear*. We have naturally a covering on our ears, so that we perceive not what God saith, Job xxxiii. 14. but when God will manifest himself to a soul he uncovers the ear, saith, *Ephatha, be opened, he takes the veil from off the heart*, 2 Cor. iii. 16.

Though God had in displeasure granted their request for a king, yet here he speaks tenderly of Israel; for even in *wrath he remembers mercy*. 1. He calls them again and again, *his people*; though a peevish and provoking people, yet mine still. 2. He sends them a man to be captain over them, that they might not be a body without a head, and to *save them out of the hands of the Philistines*, which, perhaps, was more than many of them aimed at in desiring a king. 3. He doth it with a gracious respect to them and to their cry, *I have looked upon my people and their cry is come unto me*. He gratified them with what they cried for, as the tender mother humours the froward child, lest it should break its heart. And (as Bishop Patrick observes) though he would not hear their cry to relieve them against the oppression of their kings, chap. viii. 18. yet he was so gracious as to make those kings instruments of their deliverance from the oppression of their neighbours: which was more than they had reason to expect.

2. When Saul came up towards him in the street, God again whispered Samuel in the ear, ver. 17. *Behold the man whom I spoke to thee of*. Saul being a man of unusual stature, it is natural to think that Samuel fixed his eye upon him at a distance, and perhaps, looked the more wistfully towards him, because the hour was now come, when God would send him the man that should be king of Israel, and he fancied this might be he; but that he might be fully satisfied, God told him expressly, *That is the man that shall restrain (for magistrates are heirs of restraint) in my people Israel*.

18. Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, where the seer's house is. 19. And Samuel answered Saul, and said, I am the seer: go up before me unto the high place, for ye shall eat with me to day; and to morrow I will let thee go, and will tell thee all that is in thine heart. 20. And as for thine asses that were lost three days ago, set not thy mind on them, for they are found: and on whom is all the desire of Israel? is it not on thee, and on all thy father's house? 21. And Saul answered and said, Am not I a Benjamite of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou so to me? 22. And Samuel took Saul, and his servant, and brought them into the parlour, and made them sit in the chiefest place among them that were bidden, which were about thirty persons. 23. And Samuel said unto the cook, Bring the portion which I gave thee, of which I said unto thee, Set it by thee. 24. And the cook took up the shoulder, and that which was upon it, and set it before Saul: and Samuel said, Behold, that which is left, set it before thee, and eat; for unto this time hath it been kept for thee, since I said, I have invited the people: so Saul did eat with Samuel that day. 25. ¶ And when they were come down from the high place into the city, Samuel communed with Saul upon the top of the house. 26. And they rose early and it came to pass about the spring of the day, that Samuel called Saul to the top of the house, saying, Up, that I may send thee away. And Saul arose, and they went out both of them, he and Samuel, abroad. 27. And as they were going down to the end of the city, Samuel said to Saul, Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on), but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God.

Providence having at length brought Samuel and Saul together, we have here an account of what passed between them in the gate, at the feast, and in private.

1. In the gate of the city. Passing through that Saul found him, ver. 18. and little thinking that he was Samuel himself, asked him the way to Samuel's house: *Tell me where the seer's house is*, for there he expected to find him. See how mean a figure Samuel made, though so great a man. He took no state, had not any attendants, no ensigns of honour carried before him, nor any distinguishing habit, no not when he went to church; but appeared, in all respects, so much a common person, that Saul, though he was told he should meet him, never suspected that it was he, but, as if he looked more like a porter than a prophet, asked him the way to the seer's house. Thus is great worth oftentimes hid under a very despicable appearance. Samuel knew it was not the house, but the man that he wanted; and therefore answered him, *I am the seer*, the person you enquire for, ver. 19. Samuel knew him before he knew Samuel, Thus, though all that are called to the kingdom of glory are brought to know God, yet first they were known of him, Gal. iv. 9.

Now, (1.) Samuel obliges them to stay with him till the next day. The greatest part of this day had been spent in sacrificing, and the rest of it was to be spent in holy feasting; and therefore to-morrow I will let thee go, and not sooner. Now go up before me to the high place; let us pray together, and then we will walk together. Saul had nothing in his mind but to find his asses; but Samuel would take him off from that care, and dispose him to the exercises of piety; and therefore bids him go to the high place, and go before him, because, it may be, some business obliged Samuel to call by the way. (2.) He satisfies him about his asses: ver. 20. *Set not thy mind*

on them, be not in further care about them, they are found. By this Saul might perceive that he was a prophet; that he could give him an answer to the enquiry which had not yet made, and tell him what he thought; and from thence might infer, if a man of God could do this, much more doth God himself understand our thoughts afar off. (3.) He surpriseth him with an intimation of preferment before him: *On whom is all the desire of Israel?* Is it not a king that they are set upon? and there is never a man in Israel that will suit them so as thou wilt. It doth not appear, that the country had as yet any eye upon him for the government, because they had left it wholly to God to choose for them; but such a one as he they wished for. And his advancement would be the advancement of his family and relations, as Abner, and others.

To this strange intimation Saul returns a very modest answer, ver. 21. Samuel, he thought, did but banter him, because he was a tall man, but a very unlikely man to be a king; for though the historian saith, ver. 1. his father was a mighty man of power, yet he himself speaks diminishingly of his tribe and family. Benjamin, the youngest of Jacob's sons, when grown up to be a man, he was called a little one, Gen. xlv. 20; that tribe diminished by the war of Gibeah; and I am a Benjamite; my family the least; probably a younger house; not in any place of honour or trust, no not in their own tribe. Gideon had expressed himself thus, Judg. vi. 15. An humble disposition is a good preface of preferment.

2. At the public feast. Thither Samuel took him and his servant, Though the advancing of Saul would be the deposing of Samuel; yet that good prophet was so far from envying him, or bearing him any ill-will for it, that he was the first and forwardest man to do him honour, in compliance with the will of God. If this be the man whom God has chosen, though he be none of Samuel's particular friends, or confidants; yet he is heartily welcome to his table, nay, to his bosom. We may suppose, it was no unseasonable kindness to Saul to give him a meal's meat; for it seems, by what he said, ver. 7. that all their meat and money were spent. But this was not all; Samuel treats him not as a common person, but a person of quality and distinction, to prepare both him and the people for what was to follow. Two marks of honour he put upon him.

1. He set him in the best place, as more honourable than any other of the guests, to whom he said, *Give this man place*, Luke xiv. 9. Though we may suppose the magistrates were there, who, in their own city, would claim precedency; yet the master of the feast, Saul and his servant too, (who, if he were a king, must be respected as his prime minister of state,) sit in the chiefest place, ver. 22. Note, Civil respects must be paid to those, who, in civil things, have the precedency given them by the divine providence.

(2.) He presented him with the best dish; which, having had notice from heaven the day before of his coming, ver. 16. he had designed for him, and ordered the cook to secure for him, when he gave orders for inviting the guests, and making preparation for them. And what should this precious dish be, which was so very carefully reserved for the king elect? One would expect it should be something very nice and delicate; no, it was a plain shoulder of mutton, ver. 23. 24. the right shoulder of the peace-offerings was to be given to the priests, who were God's receivers, Lev. vii. 32. the next in honour to that was the left shoulder, which probably, was always allotted to those that sat at the upper end of the table, and was wont to be Samuel's mess at other times; so that his giving it to Saul now was an implicit resignation of his place to him. Some observe a significance in this dish, the shoulder notes strength, and the breast, which some think went with it, notes affection, he that was king had the government upon his shoulder, for he must bear the weight of it; and the people in his bosom, for they must be dear to him.

3. What passed between them in private; both that evening and early the next morning, Samuel communed with Saul upon the flat roof of the house, ver. 25, 26. we may suppose Samuel now told him the whole story of the people's desire of a king, the grounds of their desire, and God's grant of it; to all which Saul, living very private, was perhaps a stranger; he satisfied him that he was the person God had pitched upon for the government; and whereas Saul would object, that Samuel was in possession, and he would not for all the world take it out of his hands: Samuel, we may suppose, gave him all the assurance he could desire of his willingness to resign. Early in the morning he sent him towards home, brought him part of the way, bid him send his servant before, that they might be private, ver. 27. and there, as we find in the beginning of the next chapter, he anointed him, and therein shewed him the word of the Lord, i. e. gave him full satisfaction that he was the person chosen to be king, for he would not jest with that sacred rite. It is by the *unction of the Holy Ghost*, that Christ, the great prophet, shews us the word of the Lord, 1 John ii. 27. the same anointing teacheth you of all things.

C H A P. X.

We left Samuel and Saul walking together, probably some private way over the fields down from Ramah, perhaps in the paths of the vineyards, and Saul expecting to hear from Samuel the word of God. Now here we have, 1. The anointing of Saul, then and there, ver. 1. The signs Samuel gave him, ver. 2—6. And instructions, ver. 7, 8. 2. The accomplishment of those signs to the satisfaction of Saul, ver. 9—13. 3. His return to his father's house, ver. 14—16. 4. His public election by lot, and solemn inauguration, ver. 17—25. 5. His return again to his own city, ver. 26, 27. It is a great work that is here a doing, the setting up not only of a monarch, but of monarchy itself in Israel; and therefore in all the advances towards it, much of God is seen.

1. THEN Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance? 2. When thou art departed from me to-day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah: and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you saying, What shall I do for my son? 3. Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet there three men going up to God to Bethel, one carrying thee kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine. 4. And they will salute thee, and give thee

two loaves of bread, which thou shalt receive of their hands. 5. After that, thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place, with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp before them, and they shall prophecy. 6. And the spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophecy with them, and shalt be turned into another man. 7. And let it be when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion shall serve thee, for God is with thee. 8. And thou shalt go down before me to Gilgal, and behold, I will come down unto thee, to offer burnt-offerings, and to sacrifice sacrifices of peace-offerings: seven days shalt thou tarry, till I come to thee, and shew thee what thou shalt do.

Samuel is here executing the office of a prophet, giving Saul full assurance from God that he should be king, as he was afterwards, according to these prophecies which went before him.

1. He anointed him and kissed him, ver. 1. This was not done in a solemn assembly, but being done by divine appointment, that made up the want of all external solemnities, nor was it ever the less valid for its being done in private, under a hedge, or, as the Jews say, by a fountain. God's institutions are great and honourable, though the circumstances of their administration be never to mean and despicable. (1.) Samuel, by anointing Saul, assured him, that it was God's act to make him king, *Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee?* and in token of that the high priest was anointed to his office, which signified the conferring of those gifts upon him that were requisite for the discharge of his office; and the same was intimated in the anointing of kings; for whom God calls he qualifies, and that is a good proof of a commission. These sacred unctions, then used, pointed at the great Messiah, or anointed One, the King of the church, the High-priest of our profession, who was anointed with the oil of the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure, and above all the priests and princes of the Jewish church. It was common oil, no doubt, which Samuel used, and we read not of his blessing it, or praying over it. But it was only a vial of oil that he anointed him with, the vessel brittle, because his kingdom would soon be cracked and broken: and the quantity small, because he had but little of the Spirit conferred upon him, to what David had, who was therefore anointed with a horn of oil, and so was Solomon, and Jehu with a box of oil. (2.) By kissing him, he assured him of his own approbation of the choice, not only his consent to it, but in his complacency in it, though it abridged his power and eclipsed his glory, and the glory of his family. *God has anointed thee*, says Samuel, *to be king*, and I am satisfied and very well pleased, in pledge of which take this kiss. It was likewise a kiss of homage and allegiance, hereby he not only owns him to be king, but his king, and in this sense we are commanded to *kiss the son*, Plal. ii. 12. God has anointed him, and therefore we must thus acknowledge him, and do homage to him. In Samuel's explication of the ceremony he minds him, 1. Of the nature of the government to which he is called; he was anointed to be a captain, a commander indeed, which speaks honour and power, but a commander in war, which speaks care and toil, and danger. 2. Of the original of it. *The Lord hath anointed thee*. By him he ruled, and therefore must rule for him, in dependence on him, and with an eye to his glory. 3. Of the end of it: it is over his inheritance, to take care of that, protect it, and order all the affairs of it for the best, as a steward whom a great man sets over his estate, to manage it for his service, and give an account of it to him.

2. For his further satisfaction he gives him some signs, which should come to pass immediately, this very day; and they were such as would not only confirm the word of Samuel in general, and prove him a true prophet, but would confirm this word to Saul in particular, that he should be king.

1. He should presently meet with some that would bring him intelligence from home, of the care his father's house was in concerning him, ver. 2. these he would meet hard by Rachel's sepulchre. The first place he directs him to was a sepulchre, the sepulchre of one of his ancestors, for Rachel died in travail with Benjamin, there he must read a lecture of his own mortality, and now he had a crown in his eye must think of his grave, in which all his honour would be laid in the dust. Here two men would meet him, perhaps sent on purpose to look after him, and would tell him the asses were found, and his father was in pain concerning him, saying, *What shall I do for my son?* He would reckon it happened well that he met with these messengers; and it is good to eye providence in favourable conjunctures, though the matter be minute, and be encouraged to trust it in great matters.

2. He should next meet with others going to Bethel, where it should seem there was a high place for religious worship, and these men were bringing their sacrifices thither, ver. 3, 4. It was a token for good to one that was designed for the government of Israel, wherever he came to meet with people going to worship God. It it supposed these kids and loaves, and the bottle of wine which the three men had with them, were designed for sacrifice, with the meat-offerings and drink-offerings that were to attend the sacrifice: yet Samuel tells Saul they would give him two of their loaves, and he must take them. This would look to us now like the relieving of a beggar: Saul must hereafter remember the time when he received alms, and must therefore be humble and charitable to the poor. But, perhaps, it would then be construed a fit present for a prince; and as such Saul must receive it, the first present that was brought him, by such as knew not what they did, nor why they did it, but God put it into their hearts, which made it the more fit to be a sign to him. These two loaves, which were the first tribute paid to this new anointed king, might serve for an admonition to him, not to spend the wealth of his crown in luxury, but still be content with plain food. Bread is the staff of life.

3. The most remarkable sign of all would be his joining with a company of prophets that he should meet with under this influence of a spirit of prophecy which should at that time come upon him. What God works in us by his Spirit, serves much more for the confirming of faith, than any thing wrought for us by his providence. He here tells him, ver. 5, 6. (1.) Where this would happen, *at the hill of God*, where there was a garrison of the Philistines, which is supposed to be near Gibeah, his own city, for there was the Philistines garrison, chap. xiii. 3. Perhaps, it was one of the articles of Samuel's agreement with them, that they should have a garrison there, or rather, after they were subdued in the beginning of his time they got ground again, so far as to force this garrison into that place, and thence God raised up the man that should chastise them. There was a place that

was called the *hill of God*, because of one of the schools of the prophets built upon it; and such respect did even Philistines themselves pay to religion, that a garrison of their soldiers suffered a school of God's prophets to live peaceably by them, and did not only dislodge them, but not restrain or disturb the public exercises of their devotion. (2.) Upon what occasion: He should meet a company of prophets with music before them, prophesying, and with them he should join himself. The prophets were not (as it should seem) divinely inspired to foretell things to come, nor did God reveal himself to them by dreams and visions, but they employed themselves in the study of the law, in instructing their neighbours, and in the acts of piety, especially in praising God, wherein they were wonderfully assisted and enlarged by the Spirit of God. It was happy for Israel that they had not only prophets, but companies of prophets, who gave them good instructions, and set them good examples, and helped very much to keep up religion among them. Now the word of the Lord was not precious, as it had been when Samuel was first raised up, who had been instrumental in founding these colleges, or religious houses, whence it is probably, the synagogues took their rise. What pity was it that Israel should be weary of the government of such a man, who, though he had not, as a man of war, expelled the Philistines, yet (which was a greater kindness to Israel) had, as a man of God, settled the schools of the prophets. Music was then used as a proper means to dispose the mind to receive the impressions of the good Spirit, as it did Elisha's, 2 Kings iii. 15. but we have no reason to look for the same benefit by it now, unless we saw it as effectual as it was then in Saul's case, to drive away the evil spirit. These prophets had been at the high-place, probably offering sacrifice, and now they came back singing psalms. We should come from holy ordinances with our hearts greatly enlarged in holy joy and praise. See *Psal. cxxxviii. 5*. Saul should find himself strongly moved to join with them, and should be turned thereby into another man, from what he had been while he lived in a private capacity. The Spirit of God by his ordinances, changeth men, wonderfully transforms them; Saul by praising God in the communion of saints, became another man, but whether a new man or no, may be questioned.

3. He directs him to proceed in the administration of his government, as providence should lead him, and as Samuel should advise him. 1. He must follow providence in ordinary cases, ver. 7. *Do as occasion shall serve thee*. Take such measures as thine own prudence shall direct thee. But, 2. In an extraordinary strait that would hereafter befall him at Gilgal, and would be the most critical juncture of all other, when he would have special need of divine aids, he must wait for Samuel to come to him, and must tarry seven days in expectation of him, ver. 8. How his failing in this matter proved his fall we find afterward, chap. xiii. 11. It is now a plain intimation to him, that he was upon his good behaviour, and, though a king, must act under the direction of Samuel, and do as he should order him. The greatest of men must own themselves in subjection to God and his word.

9. And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day. 10. And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him, and the spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them, 11. And it came to pass when all that knew him beforetime, saw, that behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the people said one to another, *What is this that is come unto the son of Kish?* Is Saul also among the prophets? 12. And one of the same place answered and said, *But who is their father?* Therefore it became a proverb, *Is Saul also among the prophets?* 13. And when he had made an end of prophesying, he came to the high-place. 14. ¶ And Saul's uncle said unto him, and to his servant, *Whither went ye?* And he said, *To seek the asses: and when we saw that they were no where, we came to Samuel.* 15. And Saul's uncle said, *Tell me, I pray thee, what Samuel said unto you.* 16. And Saul said unto his uncle, *He told us plainly that the asses were found.* But of the matter of the kingdom whereof Samuel spake, he told him not.

Saul has now taken his leave of Samuel, much amazed, we may well suppose, at what had been done to him, is almost ready to question whether he be awake or no, and whether it be not all a dream. Now here we are told,

1. What occurred by the way, ver. 9. Those signs which Samuel had given him came to pass very punctually; but that which gave him the greatest satisfaction of all, was this, he found immediately that God had given him another heart. A new fire was kindled in his breast, such as he had never before been acquainted with: seeking his asses is quite out of his mind, and he thinks of nothing but fighting the Philistines, and redressing the grievances of Israel; making laws, administering justice, and providing for the public safety; these are the things that now fill his head. He finds himself raised to such a pitch of boldness and bravery, as he never thought he should have been conscious to himself of: He has no longer the heart of a husbandman, that is low, and mean, and narrow, and concerned only about his corn and cattle; but the heart of a stateman, a general, a prince. Whom God calls to service he will make fit for it. If he advance to another station, he will give another heart, to those who sincerely desire to serve him with their power.

2. What occurred when he came near home; they came to the hill, ver. 10. i. e. to Gibeah, or Geba, which signifies a hill; and so the Chaldee here takes it as a proper name; he met with the prophets as Samuel had told him, and the Spirit of God came upon him; strongly and suddenly, so the word signifies; but not so as to rest and abide upon him. It came on, so as to go off quickly; however, for the present, it had a strange effect upon him; for he immediately joined with the prophets in their devotion, and that with as good a decorum, and as great a transport of affection, as any of them; *He prophesied among them*.

Now, 1. His prophesying was publicly taken notice of, ver. 11; 12. He was now among his acquaintance, who, when they saw him among the prophets, called one another to come and see a strange sight. This would prepare them to accept of him as a king, though one of themselves, when they had seen how God had advanced him to the honour of a prophet. The seventy elders prophesied before they were made judges, *Numb. xi. 25*. Now, (1.) They all admired to see Saul among the prophets. *What is this that*

that is come to the son of Kish? Though this school of the prophets was near his father's house, yet he had never associated with them, nor shewed them any respect, perhaps had sometimes spoken slightly of them, and now to see him prophesying among them, was a surprise to them, as it was long after, when his name-lake, in the New Testament, preached that gospel which he had before persecuted, *Acts ix. 21.* Where God gives another heart, it will soon shew itself. (2.) One of them, that was wiser than the rest, asked, *Who is their father, or instructor? Is it not God? Are they not all taught of him? Do they not all owe their gifts to him? And is he limited? Cannot he make Saul a prophet, as well as any of them, if he pleases? Or, Is not Samuel their father? Under God, he was so: and Saul had now lately been with him, which, by his servant, he might know. No marvel for him to prophecy, who lay last night under Samuel's roof.* (3.) It became a proverb, commonly used in Israel, when they would express their wonder at a bad man's either becoming good, or at least being found in good company, *Is Saul among the prophets?* Note, Saul among the prophets, is a wonder to a proverb. Let not the worst be despaired of, let not an external shew of devotion, and a sudden change for the present, be too much relied on; for Saul among the prophets, was Saul still.

But, 2. His being anointed was kept private: When he had done prophesying, (1.) It should seem he uttered all his words before the Lord, and recommended the affair to his favour, for he went straight to the high place, ver. 13. to give God thanks for his mercies to him, and to pray for the continuance of those mercies. But, (2.) He industriously concealed it from his relations: His uncle, who either met him at the high-place, or light of him as soon as he came home, took him to examination, ver. 14. Saul owned, for his servant knew it, that they had been with Samuel, and that he told them the asses were found, but said not a word of the kingdom, ver. 14, 15. This was an instance, (1.) Of his humility; many a one would have been so elevated with this surprising elevation, as to proclaim it upon the house-top. But Saul, though he might please himself with it, in his own breast, did not pride himself in it among his neighbours. The heirs of the kingdom of glory are well enough pleased that *the world knows them not*, 1 John iii. 1. (2.) Of his prudence. Had he been forward to proclaim it, he would have been envied, and he knew not what difficulty that might have created him. Samuel had communicated it to him as a secret, and he knows how to keep counsel. Thus it appeared, that he had another heart, a heart fit for government. (3.) Of his dependance upon God: He doth not go about to make an interest for himself, but leaves it to God to carry on his own work by Samuel, and for his own part, sits still, to see how the matter will fall.

17. ¶ And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh; 18. And said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you. 19. And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations: and ye have said unto him, *Nay*, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands. 20. And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. 21. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found: 22. Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither? and the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. 23. And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people, from his shoulders and upward. 24. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that *there is none like him among all the people?* And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king. 25. Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD: and Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house. 26. ¶ And Saul also went home to Gibeah, and there went with him a band of men, whose hearts God had touched. 27. But the children of Belial said, How shall this man save us? And they despised him, and brought him no presents: but he held his peace.

Saul's nomination to the throne, is here made public, in a general assembly of the elders of Israel, the representatives of their respective tribes at Mizpeh. It is probable, this convention of the states was called, as soon as conveniently it might after Saul was anointed, for if there must be a change in their government, the sooner the better: it might be of bad consequence to be long in the doing. The people being met in a solemn assembly, in which God was in a peculiar manner present, and therefore it is said, they were called together unto the Lord, ver. 17. Samuel acts for God among them.

1. He reproves them for casting off the government of a Prophet, and desiring that of a captain. Shews them, ver. 18. how happy they had been under a divine regimen; when God ruled them, he delivered them out of the hand of them that oppressed them, and what would they desire more? Could the mightiest man of valour do that for them, which the Almighty God had done? Helikewise shews them, ver. 19. what an affront they had put upon God, who had himself saved them out of all their tribulations, by his own power, and by such as he had immediately called and qualified, in desiring a king to save them. He tells them in plain terms; *ye have this day rejected your God*, you have in effect done it, so he continues it, and he might justly, for your so doing, reject you. They that can live better by sense than by faith, that stay themselves upon an arm of flesh, rather than upon the almighty arm, forsake a fountain of living waters for broken cisterns. And some make their obstinacy, in this matter, to be a preface of their rejecting Christ, in casting off whom they cast off God, that he should not reign over them.

No. XLII.

2. He puts them upon choosing their King by lot: he knew whom God had chosen, and had already anointed him, but he knew also the peevishness of that people, and that there were those among them, who would not acquiesce in the choice, if it depended upon his single testimony: and therefore that every tribe, and every family of the chosen tribe, might please themselves with having a throw for it, he calls them to the lot, ver. 19. Benjamin is taken out of all the tribes, ver. 20. and out of that tribe Saul the son of Kish, ver. 21. By this method it would appear to the people, as it already appeared to Samuel, that Saul was appointed of God to be king, for *the disposal of the lot is of the Lord*: it would also prevent all disputes and exceptions, for *the lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty*. When the tribe of Benjamin was taken, they might easily foresee, that they were setting up a family, that would soon be put down again, for dying Jacob had, by the spirit of prophecy, entailed the dominion upon Judah; that is the tribe that must rule as a lion, Benjamin shall only *raven as a wolf*, Gen. xlix. 10, 27. Those therefore that knew the scriptures, could not be very fond of the doing of that which they foresaw must ere long be undone again.

3. It is with much ado, and not without further enquiries of the Lord, that Saul is at length produced. When the lot fell upon him, every one expected he should answer to his name at the first call, but, instead of that, none of his friends could find him, ver. 21. he had *hid himself among the stuff*, ver. 22. So little fond was he now of that power, which yet, when he was in possession of, he could not, without the utmost indignation think of parting with. He withdrew, in hopes that upon his not appearing, they would proceed to another choice; or thus to express his modesty, for, by what had already passed he knew he must be the man. We may suppose, he was at this time really averse to take upon him the government. (1.) Because he was conscious to himself of unfitness for so great a trust. He had not been bred up to books, or arms, or courts, and feared he should be guilty of some fatal blunder. (2.) Because it would expose him to the envy of his neighbours that were ill-affected towards him. (3.) Because he understood by what Samuel had said, that the people sinned in asking a king, and it was in anger that God granted their request. (4.) Because the affairs of Israel were at this time in a bad posture; the Philistines were strong, the Ammonites threatening, and he must be bold indeed, that will set sail in a storm.

But the congregation believing that choice well made which God himself made, would leave no way untried to find him out on whom the lot fell. They enquired of the Lord, either by the high-priest, and his breast-plate of judgment, or by Samuel, and his spirit of prophecy; and the Lord directed them where they should find him, hid among the carriages, and thence they fetched him, ver. 23. Note, none will be losers at last by their humility and modesty. Honour, like the shadow, follows those that flee from it, but flees from those that pursue it.

4. Samuel presents him to the people, and they accept of him. He needed not mount the bench or scaffold to be seen, when he stood upon even ground with the rest, he topped them all, was seen above them all, for he was taller than any of them by *head and shoulders*, ver. 23. Look you, saith Samuel, what a king God hath chosen for you, just such a one as you wished for, *There is none like him among all the people*, that has so much majesty in his countenance, such a graceful stateliness in his mien, and is in the crowd like a cedar among the shrubs. Let your own eyes be judges, is he not a brave and gallant man? The people hereupon signified their approbation of the choice, and their acceptance of him, they *shouted and said let the king live*, i. e. let him long reign over us, in health and prosperity. Subjects were wont to testify their affection and allegiance to their prince, by their good wishes, and those turned (as our translation does this) into addresses to God, *Psalms lxxii. 15. Prayer shall be made for him continually*, Psalm xx. 1. Samuel had told them, they would soon be weary of their king, but, in the mind they are now in, they will never be so: *Let him live*.

5. Samuel settles the original contract between them, and leaves it upon record, ver. 25. He had before told them, *the manner of the king*, chap. viii. 11. how he would abuse his power; now he tells them, *the manner of the kingdom*, or rather, the law, or judgment, or constitution of it; what power the prince might challenge, and the utmost of the property the subject might claim. He fixed the land-marks between them, that neither might encroach upon the other; let them rightly understand one another at first, and let the agreement remain in black and white, and that will preserve a good understanding between them ever after. The learned Bishop Patrick thinks, he now repeated and registered what he had told them, chap. viii. 11. of the arbitrary power their kings would assume; that it might hereafter be a witness against them, that they had drawn the calamity upon themselves, for they were warned what it would come to, and yet they would have a king.

6. The convention was dissolved, when the solemnity was over, *Samuel sent every man to his house*. Here were no votes past, nor, for ought appears, so much as a motion made, for the raising of money to support the dignity of their new elected king; if therefore he afterwards think fit to take what they do not think fit to give, which yet it was necessary he should have, they must thank themselves. They went every man to his house, pleased with the name of a king over them, and *Saul also went home to Gibeah*, to his father's house, not puffed up with the name of a kingdom under him. At Gibeah he had no palace, no throne, no court, yet thither he goes. If he must be a king, as one mindful of the rock out of which he was hewn, he will make his own city the royal city, nor will he be ashamed (as too many are, when they are preferred) of his mean relations. Such a humble spirit as this, puts a beauty and lustre upon great advancements. The condition rising, and the mind not rising with it, behold how good and pleasant it is!

But how did the people stand affected to their new king? The generality of them, it should seem, did not shew themselves much concerned, they *went every man to his own house*, their own domestic affairs lay nearer their hearts, than any interests of the public; this was the general temper. But, (1.) There were some so faithful as to attend him, ver. 26. *A band of men whose hearts God had touched*. Not the body of the people, but a small company, who, either because they were fond of their own choice of a king, or because they were pleased with God's choice of this king, or because they have so much more sense than their neighbours, as to conclude, that if he be a king he must be respected accordingly, went with him to Gibeah as his life-guard. They were those *whose hearts God had touched*, in this instance, to do their duty. Note, Whatever good there is in us, or is done by us, at any time, it must be ascribed to the grace of God. If the heart bend at any time the right way, it is because he has touched it. One touch is enough, when it is divine.

(2.) There were others so spiteful as to affront him; children of Belial, men that would endure no yoke, that would be pleased with nothing that either God or Samuel did; they *despised him*, ver. 27. for the meanness of his tribe and family, the smallness of his estate, and privacy of his education; and they said, *How shall this save us?* Yet they did not propose any man more likely; nor, whoever they had, must their salvation come from the

man, but from God. They would not join with their neighbours in testifying an affection to him and his government, by bringing him presents, or addressing him upon his accession to the crown. Perhaps, those discontented spirits were most earnest for a king, and yet, now they had one, they quarrelled with him, because he was not altogether such a one as themselves. It was reason enough for them not to like him, because others did. Thus differently are men affected to our exalted Redeemer. God hath set him king upon the holy hill of Zion: There is a remnant that submit to him, rejoice in him, bring him presents, and follow him wherever he goes; and they are such *whose hearts God has touched*, whom he has made willing in the day of his power; But there are others who despise him, who ask, *How shall this man save us?* They are offended in him, stumble at his external meanness, and they will be broken by it.

Lastly, How did Saul resent the ill carriage of those that were distressed to the government? *He held his peace*, margin, *He was as though he had been deaf*. He was so far from resenting it, that he seemed not to take notice of it. Which was an evidence, both of his humility and modesty, and the mercifulness of his disposition, and also, that he was well satisfied with his title to the crown; for those are commonly most jealous of their honour, and most revengeful of affronts, that gain their power by ill means. Christ held his peace, when he was affronted, for it was the day of his patience; but there is a day of recompence coming.

C H A P. XI.

In this chapter we have the first-fruits of Saul's government, in the glorious rescue of Jabesh-gilead out of the hands of the Ammonites. Let not Israel hence infer, that therefore they did well to ask a king, God could and would have saved them without one; but let them admire God's goodness, that he did not reject them, when they rejected him, and acknowledge his wisdom in the choice of the person, whom, if he did not find fit, yet he made fit, for the great trust he called him to, and enabled in some measure, to merit the crown by his public services, before it is fixed on his head by the public approbation. Here is, 1. The great extremity to which the city of Jabesh-gilead was reduced, on the other side Jordan, by the Ammonites, ver. 1—3. 2. Saul's great readiness to come to their relief, whereby he signalized himself, ver. 4—10. 3. The good success of his attempt, by which God signalized him, ver. 11. 4. Saul's tenderness, notwithstanding this, towards those that had opposed him, ver. 12, 13. 5. The public confirmation and recognition of his election to the government, ver. 14, 15.

1. THEN Nahash the Ammonite came up, and encamped against Jabesh-gilead: and all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash: Make a covenant with us, and we will serve thee, **2.** And Nahash the Ammonite answered them, On this condition will I make a covenant with you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel. **3.** And the elders of Jabesh said unto him, Give us seven days respite, and we may send messengers unto all the coasts of Israel: that then if *there be* no man to save us, we will come out to thee. **4.** ¶ Then came the messengers to Gibeah of Saul, and told the tidings in the ears of the people: and all the people lift up their voices.

The Ammonites were ill neighbours to those tribes of Israel that lay next them, though descendants from just Lot, and for that reason were dealt civilly with by Israel. See *Deut. ii. 19.* Jephthah in his time had humbled them, but now the sin of Israel had put them into a capacity to make head again, and avenge that quarrel. The city of Jabesh-gilead had been some ages ago destroyed by Israel's sword of justice, for not appearing against the wickedness of Gibeah, *Judg. xxi. 10.* and now being replenished again, probably, by the posterity of those that then escaped the sword, it is in danger of being destroyed by the Ammonites, as if some ill fate attended the place. Nahash, king of Ammon, (*1 Chron. xix. 1.*) laid siege to it. Now here,

1. The besieged beat a parley, *ver. 1. Make a covenant with us, and we will surrender upon terms, and serve thee.* They had lost the virtue of Israelites, else they had not lost the valour of Israelites, nor tamely yielded to serve an Ammonite, without one bold struggle for themselves. Had they not broke their covenant with God, and forsaken his service, they needed not thus to have courted a covenant with a Gentile nation, and offered themselves to serve them.

2. The besiegers offer them base and barbarous conditions; they will spare their lives, and take them to be their servants, upon condition they shall *put out their right eyes*, *ver. 2.* The Gileadites were content to part with their liberty and estates, for the ransom of their blood; and had the Ammonites taken them at their word, the matter had been so settled immediately, and the Gileadites would not have sent out for relief: but their abject concessions make the Ammonites more insolent in their demands, and they cannot be content to have them their servants, but, (1.) They must torment them, and put them to pain, exquisite pain, for so the thrusting out of an eye would be. (2.) They must disable them for war, and render them incapable, though not of labour, that would have been a lot to their lords, yet of bearing arms, for in those times they fought with shields in their left hands, which covered their left eye, so that a soldier without his right eye, was in effect blind. (3.) They must put a reproach, upon all Israel, as weak and cowardly, that would suffer the inhabitants of one of their chief cities to be thus miserably used, and not offer to rescue them.

3. The besieged desire and obtain seven days time to consider of this proposal, *ver. 3.* If Nahash had not granted them this respite, we may suppose the horror of the proposal would have made them desperate, and they would rather have died with their swords in their hands, than have surrendered to such merciless enemies; therefore Nahash, not imagining it possible, that, in so short a time, they should have relief, and being very secure of the advantages he thought he had against them, in a bravado gave them seven days, that the reproach upon Israel, for not rescuing them, might be the greater, and his triumph the more illustrious. But there was a providence in it, that his security might be his insatiation and ruin.

4. Notice is sent of this to Gibeah. They said they would send messengers to all the coast of Israel, *ver. 3.* which made Nahash the more secure, for that he thought would be a work of time, and none would be forward

to appear, if they had not one common head; and perhaps, Nahash had not yet heard of the new elected king; but the messengers, either of their own accord, or by order from their masters, went straight to Gibeah, and not finding Saul within, told their news to the people, who fell a weeping upon it, *ver. 4.* They would sooner lament their brethren's misery and danger, than think of helping them; shed their tears for them, than shed their blood. They wept, as despairing to help the men of Jabesh-gilead, and fearing, lest, if the frontier city was lost, the enemy would penetrate into the very bowels of their country, which now appeared in great hazard.

5. And behold, Saul came after the herd out of the field, and Saul said, What aileth the people that they weep? and they told him of the tidings of the men of Jabesh. **6.** And the spirit of God came upon Saul, when he heard those tidings, and his anger was kindled greatly. **7.** And he took a yoke of oxen, and hewed them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the coasts of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, Whosoever cometh not forth after Saul and after Samuel, so shall it be done unto his oxen: and the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent. **8.** And when he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. **9.** And they said unto the messengers that came, Thus shall ye say unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, To-morrow by that time the sun be hot, ye shall have help. And the messengers came and shewed it to the men of Jabesh, and they were glad. **10.** Therefore the men of Jabesh said, To-morrow we will come out unto you, and ye shall do with us all that seemeth good unto you. **11.** And it was so on the morrow, that Saul put the people in three companies, and they came into the midst of the host in the morning watch, and slew the Ammonites, until the heat of the day: and it came to pass, that they which remained were scattered, so that two of them were not left together.

What is here related, turns very much to the honour of Saul, and shews the happy fruits of that other spirit with which he was endued. Observe here,

1. His humility. Though he was anointed king, and accepted by the people, yet he did not think it below him to know the state of his own flocks, but went himself to see them, and came in the evening, with his servants, after the herd out of the field, *ver. 5.* This was an evidence that he was not puffed up with his advancement, as those are most apt to be, that are raised from a mean estate. Providence had not yet found him business as a king, he left all to Samuel, and therefore rather than be idle, he would, for the present, apply himself to his country business again; though the sons of Belial would, perhaps, despise him the more for it, such as were virtuous and wise, and loved business themselves, would think never the worse of him. He had no revenues settled upon him for the support of the dignity, and he was desirous not to be burdome to the people; for which reason, like Paul, he worked with his hands; for if he neglected his domestic affairs, how must he maintain himself and his family? Solomon gives it as a reason why men should look well to their herds, because the crown doth not endure to every generation, *Prov. xxvii. 23, 21.* Saul's did not, he must therefore provide something surer.

2. His concern for his neighbours. When he perceived them in tears, he asked, *What aileth the people that they weep?* Let me know, that if it is a grievance which can be redressed, I may help them, and that if not, I may weep with them. Good magistrates are in pain if their subjects be in *har.*

3. His zeal for the safety and honour of Israel. When he heard of the insolence of the Ammonites, and the distress of a city, a mother in Israel, the Spirit of God came upon him, and put great thoughts into his mind, and his anger was kindled greatly, *ver. 6.* He was angry at the insolence of the Ammonites, angry at the mean and sneaking spirit of the men of Jabesh-gilead, angry that they had not sent him notice sooner of the Ammonites' descent, and the extremity they were likely to be reduced to. He was angry to see his neighbours weeping, when it had been fitter for them to have prepared for war. It was a brave and generous fire that was now kindled in the breast of Saul, and such as became his high station.

4. The authority and power he exerted upon this important occasion; he soon let Israel know, that though he was retired to his privacy, he had a care for the public, and knew how to command men into the field, as well as how to drive cattle out of the field, *ver. 5, 7.* He sent summons to all the coast of Israel, to shew the extent of his power beyond his own tribe, even to all the tribes, and ordered all the military men forthwith to appear in arms at a general rendezvous in Bezek. Observe, **1.** His modesty, in joining Samuel in commission with himself; he would not execute the office of a king, without a due regard to that of a prophet. **2.** His mildness in the penalty threatened against those who should disobey his orders. He hews a yoke of oxen in pieces, and sends the pieces to the several cities of Israel, with this threatening, that whoever declines the public service, not thus shall be done to him, but thus shall it be done to his oxen. God has threatened it as a great judgment, *Deut. xxviii. 21. Thine oxen shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof.* It was necessary the command should be enforced with some penalty, but this was nothing so severe, as that which was affixed to the like order by the whole congregation, *Judg. xxi. 5.* Saul affecting to shew his government more gentle than that which they had been under. The effect of this summons was, that the militia, or train-bands of the nation, came out as one man, and the reason given is, because the fear of the Lord fell upon them. Saul did not affect to make them fear him, but they were influenced to obey his orders by the fear of God, and a regard to him who had made Saul their king, and them members one of another. Note, Religion and the fear of God will make men good subjects and good soldiers, and good friends to the public interests of their country. They that fear God, will make conscience of their duty to all men, particularly to their rulers.

5. His conduct and prudent proceedings in this great affair, *ver. 8.* he numbered those that came unto him, that he might know his own strength and

and how to canton his forces in the best manner their numbers would allow. It is the honour of princes to know the numbers of their men, but it is the honour of the King of kings that *there is not any number of his armies*. Job xxv. 3. In this muster, it seems, Judah, though numbered by itself, made no great figure, for as it was one of the tribe of twelve, so it was but one eleventh part of the whole number, thirty thousand three hundred and thirty; though the rendezvous was at Bezek, in that tribe; they wanted either the numbers, or the courage, or the zeal, that that tribe used to be famous for: so low was it just before the sceptre was brought into it in David.

6. His faith and confidence, and (grounded on that) his courage and resolution, in this enterprise. It should seem, that those very messengers, which brought the tidings from Jabesh-gilead, Saul sent into the country to raise the militia, who would be sure to be faithful and careful in their own business, and them he now sends back to their distressed countrymen, with this assurance, (in which it is probable Samuel encouraged him) *to-morrow, by such an hour, before the enemy can pretend that the seven days are expired, you shall have deliverance*, ver. 9. Be you ready to do your part, and we will not fail to do ours. Do you fall out upon the besiegers, while we surround them. Saul knew he had a just cause, a clear call, and God on his side, and therefore doubted not of success. This was good news to the besieged Gileadites, whose right eyes had wept themselves dry for their calamities, and now began to fail with looking for relief, and to ake in expectation of their doom of the ensuing day, when they must look their last; the greater the exigence, the more welcome the deliverance. When they heard it, they were glad, relying on the assurances that were sent them. And they sent into the enemies camp, ver. 10. to tell them, the next day they would be ready to meet them, which the enemies understood as an intimation that they despaired of relief, and so were made the more secure by it; if they took not care by sending out scouts, to rectify their own mistake, they must thank themselves if they were surprized, the besieged were under no obligation to give them notice of the help they were assured of.

7. His industry and close application to this business: If he had been bred up to war from his youth, and had led regiments as often as he had followed droves, he could not have gone about an affair of this nature more dexterously, nor more diligently. When the Spirit of the Lord comes upon men, it will make them expert, even without experience. A vast army (especially in comparison with the present usage) Saul had now at his foot, and a long march before him; near sixty miles, and over Jordan too. No cavalry in his army, but all infantry, which he divides into three battalions, ver. 11. And observe, 2. With what incredible swiftness he flew to the enemy; in a day and a night he came to the place of action, where his own fate and that of Israel must be determined. He had passed his word, and would not break it: nay, he was better than his word, for he promised help next day, *by that time the sun was hot*, ver. 9. but brought it before day, *in the morning watch*, ver. 11. whom God helps, he *helps right early*, Psal. xvi. 5. 2. With what incredible bravery he flew upon the enemy; betimes in the morning, when they lay dreaming of the triumphs they expected that day over the miserable inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead, before they were aware he was in the midst of their host; and his men being marched against them in three columns, they surrounded them on each side, so that they could have neither heart, nor time to make head against him.

Lastly, to complete his honour, God crowned all those virtues with success, Jabesh-gilead was rescued, and the Ammonites totally routed; he had now the day before him to complete his victory in, and so complete a victory it was, that they which remained, after a great slaughter, were scattered so, that *two of them were not left together*, to encourage or help one another, ver. 11. We may suppose that Saul was the more vigorous in this matter, 1. Because there was some alliance between the tribe of Benjamin and the city of Jabesh-gilead. That city had declined joining with the rest of the Israelites to destroy Gibeah, which was then punished as their crime, but, perhaps, was now remembered as their kindness, when Saul of Gibeah came with so much readiness and resolution to relieve Jabesh-gilead. Yet that was not all; two-thirds of the Benjamites, that then remained, were provided with wives from that city, *Judg. xxi. 14.* so that most of the mothers of Benjamin were daughters of Jabesh-gilead, for which city Saul, being a Benjamite, had therefore a particular kindness; and we find they returned this kindness, *chap. xxxi. 11, 12.* 2. Because it was the Ammonites invasion that induced the people to desire a king, so Samuel faith, *chap. xii. 12.* so that if he had not done his part in this expedition, he had failed their expectations, and had for ever forfeited their respects.

12. ¶ And the people said unto Samuel, Who is he that said, Shall Saul reign over us? bring the men, that we may put them to death. 13. And Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day: for to day the LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel. 14. Then said Samuel to the people, Come, and let us go to Gilgal, and renew the kingdom there. 15. And all the people went to Gilgal, and there they made Saul king before the LORD in Gilgal: and there they sacrificed sacrifices of peace-offerings before the LORD: and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly.

We have here the improvement of that glorious victory which Saul had obtained, not the improvement of it abroad, though we take it for granted, the men of Jabesh-gilead, having so narrowly saved their right eyes, would with them now discern the opportunity they had of avenging themselves upon these cruel enemies, and disabling them ever to restrain them in like manner again; now shall they be avenged on the Ammonites, for their right eyes condemned, as Samson on the Philistines, *for his two eyes put out*, *Judg. xvi. 28.* But the account here given, is of the improvement of it at home.

1. The people took this occasion to shew their jealousy for the honour of Saul, and their resentment of the indignities done him. Samuel, it seems, was present, if not in the action, it was too far for him to march, yet to meet them when they returned victorious: and to him, as judge, the motion was made (for they knew Saul would not be a judge in his own cause) that the sons of Belial, that *would not have him to reign over them*, should be brought forth and slain, ver. 11. Saul's good fortune (as foolish men commonly call it) went further with them to confirm his title, than either his choice by lot, or Samuel's anointing him. They had not courage thus to move for the persecution of those that opposed him, when he himself looked mean, but now his victory made him look great, now nothing will serve but they must be put to death.

2. Saul took this occasion to give further proofs of his clemency, for, without waiting for Samuel's answer, he himself quashed the motion,

ver. 12. *There shall not a man be put to death this day*, no not those men, those ill men that had abused him, and therein reflected on God himself: 1. Because it was a day of joy and triumph, *to day the Lord has wrought salvation in Israel*; and since God has been so good to us all, let us not be harsh to one another. Now God has made the heart of Israel in general so glad, let us not make sad the hearts of any particular Israelites. 2. Because he hoped they were by this day's work brought to a temper, were now convinced, that this man, under God, could save them; now honoured him, whom before they had despised; and, if they be but reclaimed, he is secured from receiving any disturbance by them, and therefore his point is gained; if an enemy be made a friend, that is more to our advantage than to have him slain. And all good princes consider, that their power is for edification, not for destruction.

3. Samuel took this occasion to call the people together *before the Lord in Gilgal*, ver. 14, 15. 1. That they might publicly give God thanks for their late victory. There they rejoiced greatly, and that God might have the praise of that which they had the comfort of, they *sacrificed to him*, as the giver of all their successes, *sacrifices of peace-offerings*. 2. That they might confirm Saul in the government, more solemnly than it had been yet done, that he might not retire again to his obscurity. Samuel would have the kingdom renewed; he would renew his resignation, and the people should renew their approbation, and so, in concurrence with, or rather in attendance upon the divine nomination, they made Saul king, making it their own act and deed to submit to him.

C H A P. XII.

We left the general assembly of the states together; in the close of the foregoing chapter; in this chapter, we have Samuel's speech to them, when he resigned the government into the hands of Saul. In which, 1. He clears himself from all suspicion or imputation of mismanagement while the administration was in his hands, ver. 1—5. 2. He minds them of the great things God had done for them, and for their fathers, ver. 6—13. 3. He sets before them good and evil, the blessing and the curse, ver. 14, 15. 4. He awakens them to regard what he said to them, by calling to God for thunder, ver. 16—19. 5. He encourageth them with hopes that all should be well, ver. 20—25. This is his farewell sermon to that august assembly, and Saul's coronation sermon.

1. **A**ND Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, I have hearkened unto your voice in all that ye said unto me, and have made a king over you. 2. And now behold, the king walketh before you: And I am old, and grey-headed, and behold, my sons are with you: and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. 3. Behold, here I am, witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or of whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. 4. And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand. 5. And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.

Here 1. Samuel gives them a short account of the late revolution, and of the present posture of their government, by way of preface to what he had further to say to them, ver. 1, 2. (1.) For his own part, he had spent his days in their service; he began betimes to be useful among them, and had continued long so. *I have walked before you*, as a guide to direct you, as a shepherd that leads his flock, Psal. lxxx. 1. *from my childhood unto this day*. As soon as he was illuminated with the light of prophecy in his early days, he began to be a burning and shining light to Israel; and now my best days are done, *I am old and grey-headed*, therefore they were the more unkind to cast him off: yet therefore he was the more willing to resign, finding the weight of government heavy upon his stooping shoulders. Old, and therefore the more able to advise them, and the more observant they should be of what he said, *for days shall speak, and the multitude of years shall teach wisdom*; and there is a particular reverence owing to the aged, especially aged magistrates, and aged ministers. Old, and therefore not likely to live long, perhaps may never have an opportunity of speaking to you again, and therefore take notice what I say. (2.) As for his sons, *Behold* (saith he) *they are with you*, you may, if you please, call them to an account for any thing they have done amiss. They are present with you, and have not run their country upon this revolution; they are upon the level with you, subjects to the new king as well as you; if you can prove them guilty of any wrong, you may prosecute them now by a due course of law, punish them, and oblige them to make restitution. (3.) As for their new king, Samuel had gratified them in setting him over them, ver. 1. *I have hearkened to your voice in all that ye said to me*, being desirous to please you, if it were possible, and make you easy, though to the discarding of myself and family; and now will you hearken to me, and take my advice? The change was now perfected, *behold the king walketh before you*, ver. 2. he appears in public, ready to serve you in public business. Now you have made yourselves like the nations in your civil government, and have cast off the divine administration in that, now take heed lest you make yourselves like the nations in religion, and cast off the worship of God.

2. He solemnly appeals to them concerning his own integrity, in the administration of the government, ver. 3. *Witness against me, whose ox have I taken!* By this he intended, (1.) To convince them of the injury they had done him, in setting him aside, when they had nothing amiss to charge him with; his government had no fault, but that it was too cheap, too easy, too gentle. Also of the injury they had done themselves, in turning off one that did not so much as take an ox or an ass from them, to put themselves under the power of one that would take their fields and vineyards, nay, and their very sons and daughters from them, *chap. viii. 21.* so unlike would the manner of the king be from his manner. (2.) To preserve his own reputation; they that heard of Samuel's being rejected as he was, would be ready to suspect, that certainly he had done some ill thing, or he had never been so ill treated, so that it was necessary for him to make this challenge.

challenge, that it might appear upon record, that it was not for any iniquity in his hands that he was laid aside, but to gratify the humour of a giddy people, who owned they could not have a better man to rule them, only they desired a bigger man. There is a just debt, which every man owes to his own good name, especially men in public stations, which is to guard it against unjust aspersions and suspicions, that we may finish our course with honour as well as joy. (3.) As he designed hereby to leave a good name behind him, so he designed to leave his successor a good example before him; let him write after his copy, and he will write fair. (4.) Samuel designed, in the close of his discourse, to reprove the people, and therefore he begins with a vindication of himself: for he that will, with confidence, tell another of his sin, must see to it, that he himself be clear.

Now observe, 1. What it is that Samuel here acquits himself from, (1.) He had never, under any pretence whatsoever, taken that which was none of his own, either ox or ass: had never distrained their cattle for tribute, fines or forfeitures, nor used their service without paying for it. (2.) He had never defrauded those with whom he dealt, nor oppressed those that were under his power. (3.) He had never taken bribes to pervert justice, nor was ever biased by favour or affection, to give judgment in a cause against his conscience. 2. How he appeals to those that had slighted him concerning it. *Here I am, witness against me*, if you have any thing to lay to my charge, do it now *before the Lord, and the king*, the proper judges. He puts honour upon Saul, by owning himself accountable to him, if he had been guilty of any wrong.

3. Upon this appeal he is honourably acquitted; he did not expect that they should do him any honour at parting, though he well deserved it, and therefore mentioned not any of the good services he had done them, for which they ought to have applauded him, and returned him the thanks of the house; all he desired was, that they should do him justice, and that they did, *ver. 4.* readily owning, 1. That he had not made his government oppressive to them, nor used his power to their wrong. 2. That he had not made it expensive to them, *neither hast thou taken ought from any man's hand*, for the support of thy dignity. Like Nehemiah, he did not *require the bread of the governor*. Neh. v. 18. had not only been righteous, but generous; *had coveted no man's silver or gold, or apparel*, Acts xx. 33.

4. This honourable testimony borne to Samuel's integrity, is left upon record to his honour, *ver. 5.* *The Lord is witness*, who searcheth the heart, and his anointed is witness, who trieth overt acts, and the people agree to it, *He is witness*. Note, The testimony of our neighbours, and especially the testimony of our own consciences for us, that we have in our places lived honestly, will be our comfort, under the slights and contempts that are put upon us. Demetrius is a happy man, that has a *good report of all men, and of the truth itself*, 3 John 12.

6. ¶ And Samuel said unto the people, *It is the LORD* that advanced Moses and Aaron, and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. 7. Now therefore stand still that I may reason with you before the LORD, of all the righteous acts of the LORD, which he did to you and to your fathers. 8. When Jacob was come into Egypt, and your fathers cried unto the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron, which brought forth your fathers out of Egypt, and made them dwell in this place. 9. And when they forgot the LORD their God, he sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the Host of Habor, and into the hands of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. 10. And they cried unto the LORD, and said, We have sinned, because we have forsaken the LORD, and have served Baalim and Ashtaroth; but now deliver us out of the hand of our enemies, and we will serve thee. 11. And the LORD sent Jerubbaal, and Bedan, and Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side, and ye dwelled safe. 12. And when ye saw that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon came against you, ye said unto me: Nay, but a king shall reign over us; when the LORD your God was your King. 13. Now therefore behold the king whom ye have chosen, and whom ye have desired: and behold, the LORD hath set a king over you. 14. If ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall both ye, and also the king that reigneth over you, continue following the LORD your God. 15. But if ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as it was against your fathers.

Samuel having sufficiently secured his own reputation instead of upbraiding the people upon it, with their unkindness to him, sets himself to instruct them, and keep them in the way of their duty, and then the change of the government would be the less damage to them.

1. He minds them of the great goodness of God to them, and to their fathers; gives them an abstract of the history of their nation, that, by the consideration of the great things God had done for them, they might be forever engaged to love him and serve him. Come, saith he, *ver. 7.* stand still, and in token of reverence, when God is speaking to you, stand still in token of attention and composedness of mind, and give me leave to reason with you. Religion has reason on its side, *Isa. i. 18.* The work of ministers is to reason with people, not only to exhort and direct, but to persuade, to convince men's judgments, and so to gain their wills and affections. Let reason rule men, and they will be good. He reasons of the righteous acts of the Lord, *i. e.* both the benefits he hath bestowed upon you, in performance of his promises, and the punishments he has inflicted on you for your sins. His favours are called *his righteous acts*, *Judg. v. 11.* because in them he is just to his own honour. He not only puts them in mind of what God had done for them in their days, but of what he had done of old, in the days of their fathers, because the present age had the benefit of

God's former favours. We may suppose, his discourse was much larger than is here related.

(1.) He minds them of their deliverance out of Egypt, into that house of bondage Jacob and his family came down poor and little; when they were oppressed, they cried unto God, who advanced Moses and Aaron from mean beginnings, to be their deliverers, and the founders of their state and settlement in Canaan, *ver. 8.*

(2.) He minds them of the miseries and calamities which their fathers brought themselves into, by forgetting God, and serving other gods, *ver. 9.* they enslaved themselves for they were sold as criminals and captives into the hands of oppressors: They disposed themselves to the desolations of war, their neighbours fought against them.

(3.) He minds them of their fathers repentance and humiliation before God for their idolatries. *They said we have sinned*, *ver. 10.* Let not them imitate the sins of their fathers, for what they had done amiss, they had many a time wished undone again; in the day of their distress they had sought unto God, and had promised to serve him, let their children then reckon that good at all times, which they found good in bad times.

(4.) He minds them of the glorious deliverances God had wrought for them, the victories he had blessed them with, and their happy settlements, many a time, after days of trouble and distress, *ver. 11.* He instances in some of their judges, Gideon and Jephthah, great conquerors in their time; among the rest he mentions Bedan, whom we read not of any where else: it might be some eminent person, that was instrumental of salvation to them, though not recorded in the book of Judges; such a one as Shamgar, of whom it is said, that he delivered Israel, but not that he judged them, *Judg. iii. 31.* Perhaps, this Bedan guarded and delivered them on one side, at the same time when some other of the judges appeared and acted for them on another side. Some think it was the same with Jair, so the learned Mr. Pool; others, the same with Samson, who was Ben-Dan; a son of Dan, of that tribe, and the spirit of the Lord came upon him, Be-Dan in Dan, in the camp of Dan. Samuel mentions himself, not to his own praise, but to the honour of God, who had made him an instrument of subduing the Philistines.

(5.) At last he puts them in mind of God's late favour to the present generation, in gratifying them with a king, when they would prescribe to God, by such a one to save them out of the hand of Nahash king of Ammon, *ver. 12.* 13. now it appears, that that was the immediate occasion of their desiring a king; Nahash threatened them, they moved Samuel to nominate a general; he told them God was commander in chief in all their wars, and they needed no other; what was wanting in them should be made up by his power; *the Lord is your king*; but they insisted on it, *nay, but a king shall reign over us*. And now, saith he, you have a king: A king of your own asking, let that be spoken to your shame; but a king of God's making, let that be spoken to his honour, and the glory of his grace. God did not cast them off then, when they, in effect, cast him off.

2. He shews them, that they were now upon their good behaviour, they and their king; let them not think, that they had now cut themselves off from all dependence upon God, and that now they had a king of their own, the making of their own fortunes (as men foolishly call it) was in their own hands; no, still their judgment must proceed from the Lord. He tells them plainly,

1. That their obedience to God would certainly be their happiness, *ver. 14.* if they would not revolt from God to idols, nor rebel against him, by breaking his commandments, but would persevere in their allegiance to him, would fear his wrath, serve his interests, and obey his will, then they and their king should certainly be happy; but observe, how the promise is expressed, *Then ye shall continue following the Lord your God*; that is, (1.) Ye shall continue in the way of your duty to God, which will be your honour and comfort. Note, Those that are sincere in their religion, God will give them grace to persevere in it: those that follow God faithfully, God will enable them to continue following him. And observe, That following God, is work that is its own wages. It is the matter of a promise as well as of a precept. (2.) Ye shall continue under the divine conduct and protection. *Ye shall be after the Lord*, so it is in the original, *i. e.* he will go before you to lead and prosper you, and make your way plain; *The Lord is with you, while you be with him*.

2. That their disobedience would as certainly be their ruin, *ver. 15.* *If ye rebel*, think not that your having a king will secure you against God's judgments, and that now you have in this instance made yourselves like the nations, you may sin at as cheap a rate as they can. No, *the hand of the Lord will be against you, as it was against your fathers*, when they offended him, in the days of the judges. We mistake if we think we can evade God's justice by shaking off his dominion. If God shall not rule us, yet he will judge us.

16. ¶ Now therefore stand and see this great thing which the LORD will do before your eyes. 17. *Is it not wheat-harvest to day?* I will call unto the LORD, and he shall send thunder and rain: that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king. 18. So Samuel called unto the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. 19. And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins, *this evil*, to ask us a king. 20. ¶ And Samuel said unto the people, Fear not: (ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; 21. And turn ye not aside: for then *should ye go* after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver, for they are vain.) 22. For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people. 23. Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD, in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way. 24. Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he hath done for you. 25. But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king.

Two things Samuel here aims at,

1. To convince the people of their sin in desiring a king. They were now rejoicing before God, in and with their king, *chap. xi. 15.* and offering to God the sacrifices of praise, which they hoped God would accept of; and this perhaps made them think, that there was no harm in asking a king, but really they had done well in it: therefore Samuel here charges it upon them as their sin, as wickedness, great *wickedness in the sight of the Lord.* Note, Though we meet with prosperity and success in a way of sin, yet we must not therefore think the more favourably of it. They have a king, and if they carry themselves well, their king may be a great blessing to them, and yet Samuel will have them perceive and see, that their *wickedness is great in asking a king.* We must never think well of that which God in his law frowns upon, though in his providence he seem to smile upon it.

Observe, 1. The expressions of God's displeasure against them for asking a king. At Samuel's word, God sent prodigious thunder and rain upon them, at a season of the year when, in that country, the like was never seen nor known before, *ver. 16, 17, 18.* Thunder and rain have natural causes, and sometimes terrible effects. But Samuel made it to appear, that this was designed by the almighty power of God, on purpose to convince them, that they had done very *wickedly in asking a king*; not only by its coming in an unusual time in wheat harvest, and this in a fair clear day, when there appeared not to the eye any signs of a storm, but by his giving notice of it before. Had there happened to be thunder and rain at the time when he was speaking to them, he might have improved it for their awakening and conviction, as we may in a like case; but to make it no less than a miracle before it came, (1.) He spoke to them of it, *ver. 16, 17. Stand and see this great thing.* He bid them *stand and hear*, *ver. 7.* but because he did not see that his reasoning with them affected them, so stupid were they and unthinking, now he bids them *stand and see.* If what he said in a *still small voice* did not reach their hearts, nor his doctrine, which dropped as the dew, they shall hear God speaking to them in dreadful claps of thunder, and the great rain of his strength. He appealed to this as a sign, *I will call upon the Lord, he shall send thunder*, shall send it just now, to confirm the word of his servant, and to make you see that I said true, when I told you that God was angry with you for *asking a king.* And the event proved him a true prophet, the sign and wonder came to pass.

3. He spoke to God for it. Samuel called unto the Lord, and in answer to his prayer, even while he was yet speaking, *The Lord sent thunder and rain.* By this Samuel made it to appear, not only what a mighty influence God has upon this earth, that he could of a sudden, when natural causes did not work towards it, produce this dreadful rain and thunder, and bring them out of his treasures, *Psal. cxxxv. 7.* but also what a mighty interest in heaven, that God would thus hearken unto the voice of a man, *Joh. x. 14.* and answer him *in the secret place of thunder*, *Psal. lxxx. 7.* Samuel, that son of prayer, was still famous for success in prayer.

Now by this extraordinary thunder and rain sent on this occasion. (1.) God testified his displeasure against them in the same way in which he had formerly testified it, and at the prayer of Samuel too against the Philistines, *chap. vii. 10. The Lord discomfited them with a great thunder.* Now Israel rebelled and vexed his holy spirit, he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them with the same weapons which, not long before, had been employed against their adversaries, *1st. lxiii. 10.* (2.) He shewed them their folly in desiring a king to save them, rather than God or Samuel, promising themselves more from an arm of flesh, than from the arm of God, or from the power of prayer. Could their king *thunder with a voice like God?* *Job xl. 9.* Could their prince command such forces as the prophet could by his prayers? (3.) He intimated to them, that how serene and prosperous soever their condition seemed to be now they had a king, like the weather in wheat-harvest, yet, if God pleased, he could soon change the face of their heavens, and persecute them with his tempest as the Psalmist speaks.

2. The impressions which this made upon the people. It startled them very much, as well it might. (1.) *They greatly feared the Lord and Samuel:* Though when they had a king they were ready to think they must fear him only; God made them know he is greatly to be feared, and his prophets for his sake. Now they were rejoicing in their king, God taught them to rejoice with trembling. (2.) They own their sin and folly in desiring a king, *ver. 19. We have added to all our sins this evil.* Some people will not be brought to a sight of their sins by any gentler methods than storms and thunders. Samuel did not extort this confession from them till the matter was settled and the matter confirmed, lest it should look as if he designed by it rather to establish himself in the government, than to bring them to repentance. Now they were *flattering themselves in their own eyes, their iniquity was found to be hateful*, *Psal. xxxvi. 2.* (3.) They earnestly begged Samuel's prayers, *ver. 19. Pray for thy servants that we die not.* They were apprehensive of their danger by the wrath of God, and could not expect that he should hear their prayers for themselves, and therefore they intreat Samuel to pray for them. Now they see their need of him whom a while ago they slighted. Thus many that will not have *Christ to reign over them*, would yet be glad to have him intercede for them, to turn away the wrath of God. And the time may come, when those that have despised and ridiculed praying people, will value their prayers, and desire a share in them. *Pray (says he) to the Lord thy God, we know not how to call him ours, but if thou hast any interest in him improve it for us.*

2. He aims to confirm the people in their religion, and engage them for ever to cleave unto the Lord. The design of his discourse is much the same with Joshua's, *chap. xxiii. and xxiv.*

1. He would not that the terrors of the Lord should frighten them from him, for they were intended to frighten them to him, *ver. 20. Fear not, though you have done all this wickedness, and though God is angry with you for it, yet do not therefore over-run his service, nor turn from following him. Fear not, i. e. despair not, fear not with amazement, the weather will clear up after the storm.* Fear not, for though God will frown upon his people, yet he will not forsake them, *ver. 22. for his great name's sake*, do not you forsake him then. Every transgression in the covenant, though it displease the Lord, yet doth not throw us out of the covenant, and therefore God's just rebukes must not drive us from our hopes in his mercy. The fixedness of God's choice is owing to the freeness of it; we may therefore hope he will not forsake his people, because it has *pleased him to make them his people.* Had he chosen them for their good merits, we might fear he would cast them off for their ill merits, but choosing them *for his name's sake, for his name's sake he will not leave them.*

2. He cautions them against idolatry, *Turn not aside from God, and the worship of him, ver. 20.* and again, *ver. 21.* for if ye turn aside from God, whatever ye turn aside to you will find it is a vain thing, that can never answer your expectations, but will certainly deceive you if you trust to it; it is a broken reed, a broken cistern. Idols are so, they are enmity and a lie: whatever we make a god of we shall find it so. Creatures in their own place are good things, but when put in God's place they are vain things. Idols could not profit those that fought to them in their wants, nor deliver

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those that fought to them in their straits, for they were vain, and not what they pretend to be: *An idol is nothing in the world, 1 Cor. viii. 4.*

3. He comforts them with an assurance he would continue his care and concern for them, *ver. 23.* They desired him to pray for them, *ver. 19.* he might have said, Go to Saul and get him to pray for you, the king that you have put in my room; but so far is he from upbraiding them with their disrespect to him, that he promiseth them much more than they asked. (1.) They asked it of him as a favour, he promised it as a duty, and startles at the thought of neglecting it. *Pray for you, saith he; God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in not doing it.* Note, It is a sin against God not to pray for the Israel of God, especially for those of them that are under our charge; and good men are afraid of the guilt of omissions. (2.) They asked him to pray for them at this time, and upon this occasion, but he promiseth to continue his prayers for them, and not to cease as long as he lived. Our rule is, to *pray without ceasing*, we sin if we restrain prayer in general, and in particular if we cease praying for the Church. (3.) They asked him only to pray for them, but he promised to do more for them, not only to pray for them, but to teach them; though they were not willing to be under his government as a judge, he would not therefore deny them his instructions as a prophet: And they may be sure he would teach them no other but the *good and the right way*; and the right way is certainly the good way; the way of duty, the way of pleasure and profit.

4. He concludes with an earnest exhortation to practical religion and serious godliness, *ver. 24, 25.* The great duty here pressed upon us is, to *fear the Lord.* He had said, *ver. 20. Fear not with a fleshly fear*, but here fear the Lord with a filial fear. As the fruit and evidence of this, serve him in the duties of religious worship, and of a godly conversation in truth and sincerity, and not in shew and profession only, with your heart, and with all your heart, not dissembling, not dividing. And two things he urgeth by way of motive, (1.) That they were bound in gratitude to serve God, considering what great things he had done for them, to engage them for ever to his service. (2.) That they were bound in interest to serve him, considering what great things he would do against them, if they should *still do wickedly*; *ye shall be destroyed* by the judgments of God, *both ye and your king* that you are so proud of, and expect so much from; and that will be a blessing to you if you keep in with God. Thus as a faithful watchman he gave them warning, and so delivered his own soul.

C H A P. XIII.

They that desired a king like all the nations, fancied that when they had one they should look very great and considerable; but in this chapter we find it proved much otherwise. While Samuel was joined in communion with Saul things went well, chap. xi. 7. But now Saul began to reign alone all went to decay, and Samuel's words began to be fulfilled, Ye shall be consumed, both you and your king: for never was the state of Israel further gone in a consumption than in this chapter. 1. *Saul appears here a very jilly prince;* (1.) *Infatuated in his counsels*, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) *Invaded by his neighbours*, *ver. 4, 5.* (3.) *Deserted by his soldiers*, *ver. 6, 7.* (4.) *Disordered in his own spirit, and sacrificing in confusion*, *ver. 8—10.* (5.) *Chidden by Samuel*, *ver. 11—13.* (6.) *Rejected of God from being a king*, *ver. 14.* 2. *The people appear here a very miserable people.* (1.) *Disheartened and dispersed*, *ver. 6, 7.* (2.) *Diminished*, *ver. 15, 16.* (3.) *Plundered*, *ver. 17, 18.* (4.) *Disarmed*, *ver. 19—23.* *This they got by casting off God's government, and making themselves like the nations, all their glory departed from them.*

1. SAUL reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel, 2. Saul chose him three thousand men of Israel; whereof two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in mount Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeah of Benjamin: and the rest of his people he sent every man to his tent. 3. And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it: and Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, Let the Hebrews hear. 4. And all Israel heard say, that Saul had smitten a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel also was had in abomination with the Philistines: and the people were called together after Saul to Gilgal. 5. ¶ And the Philistines gathered themselves together, to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots, and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the sea-shore in multitude: and they came up, and pitched in Michmash, eastward from Beth-aven. 6. ¶ When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait. (for the people were distressed) then the people did hide themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. 7. And some of the Hebrews went over Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead: as for Saul, he was yet in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

We are not told wherein it was that the people of Israel offended God, so as to forfeit his presence, and turn his hand against them, as Samuel had threatened, *chap. xii. 15.* but doubtless they left God, else he had not left them, as here it appears he did; for,

1. Saul was very weak and impolitic, and did not order his affairs with discretion. *Saul was the son of one year*, so the first words are in the original, a phrase which we make to signify the date of his reign, but ordinarily it signifies the date of one's birth; and therefore some understand it figuratively, he was as innocent and good as a child of a year old; so the Chaldee paraphrase, he was *without fault, like the son of a year.* But if we admit a figurative sense, it may as well intimate, that he was ignorant and imprudent, and as unfit for business as a child of a year old; and the following particulars make that more his character than the former. But we take

it rather, as our own translation has it, *Saul reigned one year*, and nothing happened that was considerable, it was a year of no action; but in his second year he did as follows:

(1.) He chose him a band of *three thousand men*: of which he himself commanded two thousand, and his son Jonathan one thousand, *ver. 2.* The rest of the people he dismissed to their tents. If he intended these only for the guard of his person, and his honorary attendants, it was impolitic to have so many; if for a standing army, in apprehension of danger from the Philistines, it was no less impolitic to have so few; and, perhaps, the confidence he put in this select number, and his disbanding the rest of that brave army, with which he had lately beat the Ammonites, *chap. xi. 8.* was looked upon as an affront to the kingdom, gave a general disgust, and was the reason he had so few at his call when he had occasion for them. The prince that relies on a particular party, weakens his own interest in the whole community.

(2.) He ordered his son Jonathan to surprise and destroy the garrison of the Philistines that lay near him in Geba, *ver. 3.* I wish it were not a violation or infraction of some articles with the Philistines and that it was not done treacherously and perfidiously; the reason why I suspect it is, because it is said, that for doing it, *Israel was had in abomination*, or, as the word is, *did sink with the Philistines*, *ver. 4.* as men void of common honesty, and whose word could not be relied on. If it were so, we will lay the blame not upon Jonathan, who did it, but on Saul, his prince and father, who ordered him to do it, and, perhaps, kept him in ignorance of the truth of the matter. Nothing makes the name of Israel odious to them that are without, so much as the fraud and dishonesty of those that are called by that worthy name. If professors of religion cheat and over-reach, break their word, and betray their trust, religion suffers by it, and is had in *abomination with the Philistines*. Who may one trust, if not an Israelite, one that, it is expected, should be *without guile*?

(3.) When he had thus exasperated the Philistines then he began to raise forces, which, if he had acted wisely, he would have done before. When the Philistines had a vast army ready to pour in upon him, to avenge the wrong he had done them, then was he *blowing the trumpet through the land*, among a careless, it not a disaffected people, saying, *Let the Hebrews hear*, *ver. 3.* and so as many as thought fit came to Saul to Gilgal, *ver. 4.* But now the generality, we may suppose, drew back, either in dislike of Saul's politics, or in dread of the Philistines power, who, if he had summoned them sooner, would have been as ready at his beck as they were when they marched against the Ammonites. We often find that after-wit would have done much better before, and have prevented much inconvenience.

1. Never did the Philistines appear in such a formidable body as they did now, upon this provocation which Saul gave them; we may suppose they had great assistance from their allies, for, *ver. 5.* beside six thousand horse, which in those times, when horses were not so much used in war as they are now, was a great body, they had an incredible number of chariots, thirty thousand in all, most of them, we may suppose, were carriages for the bag and baggage of so vast an army, not chariots of war. But their foot was innumerable as *the sand of the sea-shore*; so jealous were they for the honour of their nation, and so much enraged at the baseness of the Israelites in destroying their garrison. If Saul had asked counsel of God before he had given the Philistines this provocation, he and his people might the better have born this threatening trouble which they had now brought on themselves by their own folly.

2. Never were the people of Israel so faint-hearted, so sneaking, so very cowardly, as they were now. Some considerable numbers, it may be, came to Saul to Gilgal, but hearing of the Philistines numbers and preparations, their spirits sunk within them. Some think because they did not find Samuel there with Saul. They that a while ago, were weary of him, and wished for a king, now had small joy of their king unless they could see him under Samuel's direction. Sooner or later men will be made to see that God and his prophets are their best friends. Now they saw the Philistines making war upon them, and Samuel not coming in to help them, they know not what to do; *men's hearts failed them for fear*. And, 1. Some absconded. Rather than run upon death among the Philistines they buried themselves alive in caves and thickets, *ver. 6.* See what work sin makes; it exposeth men to perils, and then robs them of their courage and dispirits them. A single person, by faith, can say, *I will not be afraid of ten thousand*, *Psalm. lxxvi. 1.* but here thousands of degenerate Israelites tremble at the approach of a great crowd of Philistines. Guilt makes men cowards. 2. Others fled, *ver. 7.* They went over Jordan to the land of Gilead, as far as they could from the danger, and to a place where they had lately been victorious over the Ammonites: where they had triumphed they hoped to be sheltered. 3. Those that stayed with Saul followed him trembling, expecting no other but to be cut off, and having their hands and hearts very much weakened by the desertion of so many of their troops. And, perhaps, Saul himself, though he had so much honour as to stand his ground, yet had no courage to spare, wherewith to inspire his trembling soldiers.

8. ¶ And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him. 9. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt-offering to me, and peace-offerings. And he offered the burnt-offering. 10. And it came to pass, that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt-offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might salute him. 11. ¶ And Samuel said, What hast thou done? And Saul said, Because I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that thou camest not within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered themselves together at Michmash: 12. Therefore said I, the Philistines will come down now upon me to Gilgal, and I have not made supplication unto the LORD: I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt-offering. 13. And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee: for now would the LORD have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. 14. But now thy kingdom shall not continue: the LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people, because thou hast not kept that which the LORD commanded thee.

Here is, 1. Saul's offence in offering sacrifice before Samuel came. Samuel when he anointed him, had ordered him to tarry for him seven days in Gilgal; promising, that at the end of those days he would be sure to come to him, and both offer sacrifices for him, and direct him what he should do. This we had, *chap. x. 8.* Perhaps that order, though inserted there, was given him afterwards; or was given him as a general rule to be observed in every public congress at Gilgal; or, as is most probable, though not mentioned again, was lately repeated with reference to this particular occasion; for, it is plain, Saul himself understood it as obliging him from God now to stay till Samuel came, else he would not have made so many excuses as he did, for not staying, *ver. 11.* This order Saul broke, he stayed till the seventh day, yet had not patience to wait till the end of the seventh day; perhaps, he began to reproach Samuel as false to his word, careless of his country, and disrespectful to his prince, thought it more fit that Samuel should wait for him, than he for Samuel. However, 1. He presumed to offer sacrifice without Samuel, and nothing appears to the contrary but that he did it himself, though he was neither priest nor prophet, as if, because he was a king, he might do any thing: a piece of presumption, which king Uzziah paid dear for, *2 Chron. xxvi. 16.* 2. He determined to engage the Philistines without Samuel's directions, though he had promised to *show him what he should do*. So self-sufficient Saul was, that he thought it not worth while to stay for a prophet of the Lord, either to pray for him, or to advise him.

This was Saul's offence, and that which aggravated it was, 1. That, for ought appears, he did not send any messenger to Samuel to know his mind, to reprove at the case to him, and to receive fresh directions from him, though he had enow about him that were swift enough of foot at this time. 2. That when Samuel came he rather seemed to boast of what he had done, than to repent of it; for he went forth to salute him, as his brother-sacrificer, and seemed pleased with the opportunity he had of letting Samuel know that he needed him not, but could do well enough without him. He went out to bless him, so the word is, as if he now thought himself a complete priest, empowered to bless as well as sacrifice, whereas he should have gone out to be blessed by him. 3. That he charged Samuel with breach of promise, *Thou camest not within the days appointed*, *ver. 11.* and therefore if any thing were amiss, Samuel must bear the blame, who was God's minister; whereas he did come according to the word, before the seven days were expired. Thus the scoffers of the latter days think the promise of Christ's coming is broken, because he doth not come in their time, though it is certain he will come at the set time. 4. That when he was charged with disobedience he justified himself in what he had done, and gave no sign at all of repentance for it. It is not sinning that ruins men, but sinning and not repenting; falling and not getting up again. See what excuses he made, *ver. 11, 12.* He would have this act of disobedience pass, 1. For an instance of his prudence, the people were most of them scattered from him, and he had no other way but this to keep those with him that remained, and to prevent their deserting too. If Samuel neglected the public concerns he would not. 2. For an instance of his piety: he would be thought very devout, and in great care not to engage the Philistines till he had by prayer and sacrifice engaged God on his side. *The Philistines* (said he) *will come down upon me, before I have made my supplication to the Lord*, and then I am undone. What! go to war before I have said my prayers! Thus he covered his disobedience to God's commands with a pretence of concern for God's favour. Hypocrites lay a great stress upon the external performances of religion, thinking thereby to excuse their neglect of the weightier matters of the law. And yet, lastly, he owns it went against his conscience to do it, *I forced myself and offered a burnt-offering*; perhaps boasting that he had broke through his convictions and got the better of them; or, at least, thinking this extenuated his fault, that he knew he should not have done as he did, but did it with reluctance. Foolish man! to think that God would be well-pleased with sacrifices offered in direct opposition both to his general and particular command.

2. The sentence passed upon Saul for this offence: Samuel found him standing by his burnt-offering, but instead of an answer of peace was sent to him with heavy tidings, and let him know, that *the sacrifice of the wicked is abomination to the Lord*, much more when he brings it, as Saul did, with a wicked mind. 1. He aggravates his crime: and faith to this king, *Thou art wicked*: which is not for any but a prophet of the Lord to say, *Job xxxiv. 18.* He charges him with being an enemy to himself and his interest, *Thou hast done foolishly*; and a rebel to God and his government, *Thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God*, that command wherewith he intended to try thy obedience. Note, Those that disobey the commandments of God do foolishly for themselves. Sin is folly, and sinners are the greatest fools. He reads his doom, *ver. 14.* *Thy kingdom shall not continue long to thee or thy family*. God has his eye upon another, a man after his own heart, and not like thee, that will have thy own will and way. The sentence is, in effect, the same with *Mene tekel*. Only now there seems room left for Saul's repentance, upon which this sentence should have been reversed; but upon the next act of disobedience it was made irreversible, *1 Sam. xv. 29.* And now, better a thousand times he had continued in obscurity tending his asses, than to be enthroned and so soon dethroned.

But was not this hard to pass so severe a sentence upon him and his house for a single error, and that seemed so small, and in excuse of which he had so much to say? No, *The Lord is righteous in all his ways*, and doth no man any wrong, *will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth*. By this, 1. He shews that there is no sin little, because no little god to sin against; but that every sin is a forfeiture of the heavenly kingdom, for which we stood fair. 2. He shews, that disobedience to an express command, though in a smaller matter, is a great provocation; as in the case of our first parents. 3. He warns us to take heed of our spirits, for that which to men may seem but a small offence, yet to him that knows from what principle, and with what disposition of mind it is done, may appear a heinous crime. 4. God, in rejecting Saul for an error seemingly little, as by a foil sets off the lustre of his mercy, in forgiving such great sins as those of David, Manasseh, and others. 5. We are taught hereby, how necessary it is that we wait on our God continually. Saul lost his kingdom for want of two or three hours patience.

15. And Samuel arose, and gat him up from Gilgal, unto Gibeah of Benjamin: and Saul numbered the people that were present with him, about six hundred men. 16. And Saul, and Jonathan his son, and the people that were present with them, abode in Gibeah of Benjamin: but the Philistines encamped in Michmash. 17. ¶ And the spoilers came out of the camp of the Philistines, in three companies: one company turned into the way that leadeth to Ophrah, unto the land of Shual. 18. And another company turned the way to Beth-horon: and another company turned to the way of the border that looketh

looked to the valley of Zeboim toward the wilderness. 19. Now there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: (for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make *them* swords or spears) 20. But all the Israelites went down to the Philistines, to sharpen every man his share and his coulter, and his ax, and his mattock. 21. Yet they had a file for the mattocks, and for the coulters, and for the forks, and for the axes, and to sharpen the goads. 22. So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that *were* with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found. 23. And the garrison of the Philistines went out to the passage of Michmash.

Here is, 1. Samuel gone in displeasure. Saul hath set up for himself, and now he is left to himself; *Samuel got him from Gilgal*, ver. 15. and it doth not appear, he either prayed with him, or directed him. Yet, in going up to Gibeah of Benjamin, which was Saul's city, he intimated, that he did not quite abandon him, but waited there to do him a kindness another time. Or he went to the college of the prophets, there to pray for Saul, when he did not think fit to pray with him.

2. Saul goes after him to Gibeah, and there musters his army, and finds his whole number to be but six hundred men, ver. 15, 16. Thus were they for their sin *diminished and brought low*.

3. The Philistines ravaged the country, and put all the adjacent parts under contribution. The body of their army, or standing camp, as it is called in the margin, ver. 23. lay in an advantageous pass at Michmash, but thence they sent out three several parties or detachments that took several ways, to plunder the country, and bring in provisions for the army, ver. 17, 18. By these the land of Israel was both terrified and impoverished, and the Philistines animated and enriched. This the sin of Israel brought upon them, *Isa. xlii. 24*.

4. The Israelites that took the field with Saul were unarmed, had only slings and clubs, but not a sword or spear among them all, except what Saul and Jonathan themselves had, ver. 19, 20, 21, 22. See here, 1. How politic the Philistines were, when they had power in their hands, and did what they pleased in Israel, they put down all the smith's shops, transplanted the smiths into their own country, and forbade any Israelite, under severe penalties, to exercise the trade or mystery of working in brass or iron, though they had rich mines of both, *Deut. viii. 9*. in such plenty, that it was said of Asher, *his shoes shall be iron or brass*, *Deut. xxxiii. 25*. This was subtilly done of the Philistines, for hereby they not only prevented the people of Israel from making themselves weapons of war, by which they would be both disused to military exercises, and unfurnished when there was occasion, but obliged them to a dependence upon them, even for the instruments of husbandry; they must go to them, *i. e.* to some or other of their garrisons, which were dispersed in the country, to have all their iron-work done, and no more might an Israelite do but use a file, ver. 20, 21. and no doubt the Philistines' smiths brought the Israelites long bills for work done. 2. How impolitic Saul was, that did not in the beginning of his reign set himself to redress this grievance. Samuel's not doing it was very excusable, he fought with other artillery; thunder and lightning in answer to his prayers, were to him instead of sword or spear; but for Saul that pretended to be a king, like the kings of the nations, to leave his soldiers without swords and spears, and take no care to provide them, especially when he might have done it out of the spoils of the Ammonites, whom he conquered in the beginning of his reign, was such a piece of negligence, as could by no means be excused. 3. How slothful and mean spirited the Israelites were, that suffered the Philistines thus to impose upon them, and had no thought or spirit to help themselves. It was reckoned very bad with them, when there was *a shield or spear found among forty thousand in Israel*, *Judg. v. 8*. and it was no better now, when there was never an Israelite with a sword by his side, but the king and his son; never a soldier; never a gentleman; sure they were reduced to this, or began to be so, in Samson's time, for we never find him with sword or spear in his hand. If they had not been dispirited, they could not have been disarmed, but it was sin that made them naked to their shame.

C H A P. XIV.

We left the host of Israel in a very ill posture, in the close of the foregoing chapter; we saw in them neither wisdom, nor strength, nor goodness, to give us ground to expect any other, but that they should all be cut off by the army of the Philistines; yet here we find, that infinite power which works without means, and that infinite goodness which gives without merit, glorified in a happy turn to their affairs, that still Samuel's words may be made good, 'The Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake,' chap. xii. 22. In this chapter we have, 1. The host of the Philistines trampled upon, and triumphed over, by the faith and courage of Jonathan, who, unknown to his father, ver. 1—3. with his armour-bearer only, made a brave attack upon them, encouraging himself in the Lord his God, ver. 4—7. Challenged them, ver. 8—12. and upon their acceptance of the challenge, charged them with such fury, or rather such faith, that he put them to flight, and set them one against another, ver. 13—15. which gave opportunity to Saul and his forces, with other Israelites, to pursue the blow, and gain a victory, ver. 16—23. 2. The host of Israel troubled and perplexed by the rashness and folly of Saul, who adjured the people to eat no food till night; which (1.) Brought Jonathan into a premature, ver. 24—30. (2.) Was a temptation to the people, when the time of that feast was expired, to eat with the blood, ver. 34—35. (3.) Jonathan's error, through ignorance, had like to have been his death, but the people rescued him, ver. 36—46. 3. In the close we have a general account of Saul's exploits, ver. 47, 48, and his family, ver. 49—52.

1. **N**OW it came to pass upon a day, that Jonathan the son of Saul said unto the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over to the Philistines' garrison, that is on the other side: but he told

not his father. 2. And Saul tarried in the uttermost part of Gibeah, under a pomegranate-tree, which is in Migron: and the people that *were* with him *were* about six hundred men: 3. And Ahiah, the son of Abitub, I-chabod's brother, the son of Phineas, the son of Eli, the LORD's priest in Shiloh, wearing an ephod: and the people knew not that Jonathan was gone. 4. ¶ And between the passages, by which Jonathan sought to go over unto the Philistines garrison, *there was* a sharp rock on the one side, and a sharp rock on the other side: and the name of the one *was* Bozez, and the name of the other Seneh. 5. The forefront of the one *was* situate north-ward over against Michmash, and the other southward over against Gibeah. 6. And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us: for *there is* no restraint to the LORD, to save by many or by few. 7. And his armour-bearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee, behold, *I am* with thee according to thy heart, 1. Then said Jonathan, Behold, we will pass over unto these men, and we will discover ourselves unto them. 9. If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you: then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. 10. But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand; and this *shall be* a sign unto us. 11. And both of them discovered themselves unto the garrison of the Philistines; and the Philistines said, Behold, the Hebrews come forth out of their holes, where they had hid themselves. 12. And the men of the garrison answered Jonathan and his armour-bearer, and said, Come up to us, and we will shew you a thing. And Jonathan said unto his armour-bearer, Come up after me: for the LORD hath delivered them into the hand of Israel. 13. And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands, and upon his feet, and his armour-bearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armour-bearer slew after him. 14. And that first slaughter which Jonathan and his armour-bearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land *which* a yoke of oxen might plough. 15. ¶ And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling.

We must here take notice,

1. Of the goodness of God in restraining the Philistines, who had a vast army of stout men in the field, from falling upon that little handful of timorous trembling people that Saul had with him, whom they would easily have swallowed up at once. It is an invisible power that sets bounds to the malice of the Church's enemies, and suffers them not to do that which we would think there is nothing to hinder them from.

2. Of the weakness of Saul, who seems there to have been quite at a loss, and unable to help himself.

1. He pitched his tent under a tree, and had but six hundred men with him, ver. 2. Where were now the three thousand men he had chosen, and put such a confidence in? chap. xiii. 2. Those, whom he trusted too much to, failed him when he most needed them. He durst not stay in Gibeah, but go into some obscure place, in the uttermost part of the city, under a pomegranate-tree, under Rimmon, so the word is, Ha-Rimmon, that Rimmon near Gibeah, in the caves of which these six hundred Benjamites, that escaped, hid themselves, *Judg. xx. 47*. Some think there Saul took shelter, so mean and abject was his spirit, now he was fallen under God's displeasure, every hour expecting the Philistines upon him, and thereby the accomplishment of Samuel's threatening, chap. xiii. 14. Those can never think themselves safe, that see themselves cast out of God's protection.

2. Now he sent for a priest, and the ark; a priest from Shiloh, and the ark from Kirjath-jearim, ver. 3—18. Saul had done ill to offer sacrifice himself, chap. xiii. 9. now he resolves never to fall into that error again, and therefore sends for a priest, and hopes to compromise the matter with God Almighty by a partial reformation, as many do whose hearts are unhumiliated and unchanged. Samuel the Lord's prophet had forsaken him, but he thinks he can make up that loss, by commanding Ahiah the Lord's priest to attend him, and he will not make him stay for him, nor reprove him, as Samuel had done, but will do just as he bids him, ver. 18, 19. Many love to have such ministers that will be what they would have them to be, and prophecy smooth things to them; and their caressing them because they are priests, they hope will atone for their enmity to those ministers that deal faithfully and plainly with them. He will also have the ark brought, perhaps, to upbraid Samuel, who in the days of his government, for ought appears, had not made any public use of it; or in hopes that they would make up the deficiency of his forces; one would think, they should never have brought the ark into the camp again, since the last time, when it not only did not save them, but did itself fall into the Philistines hands: But it is common for those that have lost the substance of religion, to be most fond of the shadows of it, as here is a deserted prince courting a deserted priest.

3. Of the bravery and piety of Jonathan, the son of Saul, who was much fitter than the father to wear the crown. A sweet imp (saith Bishop Hall) out of a crab-stock.

1. He resolved to go *incognito* into the camp of the Philistines; did not acquaint his father with his design, for he knew he would forbid him; nor the people, for he knew they would all discourage him; and because he resolved not to heed their objections he resolved not to bear them, nor ask their advice, ver. 1—3. Nor had he so great an opinion of the priest, as to consult him, but being conscious of a divine impulse putting him upon it,

t, he threw himself into the mouth of danger, in hopes of doing service to his country. The way of access to the enemies camp is described, *ver. 4.* 5. to be highly difficult, and their natural entrenchments impregnable, yet that doth not discourage him: the strength and sharpness of the rocks do but harden and whet his resolution. Great and generous souls are animated by opposition, and take a pleasure in breaking through it.

2. He encouraged his armour-bearer, a young man that attended him, to go along with him in this daring enterprize, *ver. 6.* *Come and let us put our lives in our hands, and go over to the enemy's garrison,* and try what we can do to put them into confusion. See whence he draws his encouragements. 1. They are uncircumcised, and have not the seal of the covenant in their flesh, as we have. Fear not, we shall do well enough with them, for they are not under the protection of God's covenant as we are, cannot call him theirs, as we can, by the sign of circumcision. If such as are enemies to us are also strangers to God, we need not fear them. 2. God is able to make us two victorious over their unnumbered regiments. *There is no restraint to the Lord,* no limitation to the holy one of Israel, but it is all one to him, to *save by many or by few.* This is a truth easily granted in general, that it is all alike to omnipotence, what the instruments are by which it works; and yet, it is not easy to apply it to a particular case; when we are but few and feeble, then to believe that God cannot only save us, but save by us, this is an instance of faith, which, wherever it is, shall obtain a good report. Let this strengthen the weak, and hearten the heartless; let it be pleaded with God for the enforcing of our petitions, and with ourselves for the silencing of our fears, *It is nothing with God to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power,* 2 Chron. xiv. 11. 3. Who knows, but he that can use us for his glory, will do it? *It may be, the Lord will work for us,* work with us, work a sign or miracle for us. So the Chaldee. We may encourage ourselves with hope, that God will appear for us, though we have not ground on which to build an assurance. An active faith will venture far in God's cause upon an *It may be.*

His armour-bearer, or esquire, as if he had learned to carry, not his arms only, but his heart, promised to stand by him, and follow him, whithersoever he went, *ver. 7.* We have reason to think, Jonathan felt a divine impulse and impression, putting him upon this bold adventure, in which he was encouraged by his servant's concurrence, else the danger was so great which he ran upon, that he had rather tempted God than trusted him. And, perhaps he had an actual regard to that word of Joshua, *chap. xxi. 10.* *One man of you shall chase a thousand,* borrowed from Moses, *Deut. xxxii. 30.*

3. How bold soever his resolution was, he resolved to follow providence in the execution of it, which he believed would guide him *with its eye,* Psal. xxxii. 8. and which therefore he would carefully attend, and take hints of direction from. See, 1. How he put himself upon providence, and resolved to be determined by it. Come (saith he to his confidant) we will discover ourselves to the enemy, as those that are not afraid to look them in the face, *ver. 8.* and then if they be so cautious, as to bid us stand, we will advance no further, taking that for an intimation of providence, that God would have us act defensively, and we will prepare, as well as we can, to give them a warm reception, *ver. 9.* but if they be so presumptuous as to challenge us, and the first sentinel we meet with bids us march on, we will push forward, and make as brisk an onset, assuredly gathering from thence, that it is the will of God we should act offensively, and then, not doubting but he will *stand by us,* *ver. 10.* and upon this issue he puts it, firmly believing, as we all should, (1.) That God has the governing of the hearts and tongues of all men, even of those that know him not, nor have any regard to him, and serves his own purposes by them, though they mean not so, neither doth their heart think so. Jonathan knew God could discover his mind to him if he pleased, and would do it since he depended upon him, as surely by the mouth of a Philistine, as by the mouth of a priest. (2.) That God will some way or other, direct the steps of those that *acknowledge him in all their ways,* and seek unto him for direction, with full purpose of heart to follow his conduct. Sometimes we find most comfort in that which is least our own doing, and into which we have been led by the unexpected, but well observed, turns of providence.

4. Providence gave him the sign he expected, and he answered the signal. He and his armour-bearer did not surprise the Philistines when they were asleep, but discovered themselves to them by day-light, *ver. 11.* [The guards of the Philistines, 1. Disdained them, upbraided them with the cowardice of many of their people, and looked upon them to be of the regiment of the sneakers: *Behold the Hebrews came forth out of their holes.* If some of Christ's soldiers play the coward, others that play the men, may, perhaps, be upbraided with it. 2. They defied them, *ver. 12.* *Come and we will shew you a thing;* as if they came like children to gaze about them; but meaning, as Goliath, *chap. xvii. 44.* that they would give them *as meat to the fowls of the air.* They bantered them, not doubting but to make a prey of them. This greatly emboldened Jonathan. With it he encouraged his servant, he had spoken with uncertainty, *ver. 6.* *It may be the Lord will work for us,* but now with assurance, *ver. 12.* *The Lord has delivered them,* not into our hand, he sought not his own glory, but *into the hand of Israel,* for he aimed at nothing but the advantage of the public. His faith being thus strengthened, no difficulty can stand before him, he climbs up the rock upon all four, *ver. 13.* though he had nothing to cover him, nor any but his own servant to second him, nor any human probability of any thing but death before him.

5. The wonderful success of this daring enterprize. The Philistines, instead of falling upon Jonathan, to slay him, or take him prisoner, fell before him, *ver. 13.* unaccountably, upon the first blow he gave. They fell, *i. e.*

1. They were many of them slain by him and his armour-bearer, *ver. 14.* twenty Philistines fell presently; it was not so much the name of Jonathan that made them yield so tamely; though some think, that he was become terrible to them, since he smote one of the garrisons, *chap. xiii. 3.* but it was God's right hand, and his arm, that got him this victory.

2. The rest were put to flight, and fell foul upon one another, *ver. 15.* *There was trembling in the host.* There was no visible cause for fear, they were numerous, bold, and advantageously posted; the Israelites had fled before them, not an enemy made head against them, but one gentleman and his man, and yet they shook like an aspen leaf: the consternation was general, they all trembled, even the spoilers, those that had been most bold and forward, shared in the common fright, the joints of their loins were loosed, and their knees smote one against another, and yet none of them could tell why, or wherefore; it is called a trembling of God, so the original phrase is, signifying, not only, as we render it, a very great trembling, which they could not resist, nor reason themselves clear of, but that it was supernatural, and came immediately from the hand of God. He that made the heart, knows how to make it tremble. To complete the confusion, even the earth quaked, and made them ready to fear that it would sink under them. Those that will not fear the eternal God, he can make them afraid of a shadow. See *Prov. xxxiii. 1.* *Ju. xxxiii. 14.*

16. And the watchmen of Saul in Gibeah of Benjamin looked; and, behold, the multitude melted away, and they went on beating down one another. 17. Then said Saul unto the people that were with him, Number now, and see who is gone from us. And when they had numbered, behold, Jonathan and his armour-bearer were not there. 18. And Saul said unto Ahiah, Bring hither the ark of God: (for the ark of God was at that time with the children of Israel.) 19. ¶ And it came to pass while Saul talked unto the priest, and the noise that was in the host of the Philistines went on and increased: and Saul said unto the priest, Withdraw thine hand. 20. And Saul and all the people that were with him, assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture. 21. Moreover, the Hebrews that were with the Philistines before that time, which went up with them into the camp from the country round about, even they also turned to be with the Israelites, that were with Saul and Jonathan. 22. Likewise all the men of Israel which had hid themselves in mount Ephraim, when they heard that the Philistines fled, even they also followed hard after them in the battle. 23. So the LORD saved Israel that day; and the battle passed over unto Beth-aven.

We have here the prosecution and improvement of the wonderful advantages which Jonathan and his armour-bearer gained against the Philistines.

1. The Philistines were, by the power of God, set against one another. They melted away like snow before the sun, and went on beating down one another, *ver. 16.* for, *ver. 20.* every man's sword was against his fellow. When they fled for fear, instead of turning back upon those that chased them, they reckoned those only their enemies that stood in their way, and treated them accordingly. The Philistines were very secure, because all the swords and spears were in their hands. Israel had none, except what Saul and Jonathan had, but now God shewed them the folly of that confidence, by making their own swords and spears the instruments of their destruction, and more fatal in their own hands, than if they had been in the hands of Israel. See the like done, *Judg. vii. 22,* 2 Chron. xx. 23.

2. The Israelites were hereby animated against them.

1. Notice was soon taken of it by the watchmen of Saul, those that stood centinel at Gibeah, *ver. 16.* they were aware that the host of the enemy was in great confusion, and that great slaughter was made among them, and yet upon search they found none of their own forces absent, but only Jonathan and his servant, *ver. 17.* which, no doubt, greatly animated them, and assured them, that it could be no other than the Lord's doing, when there was no more of man's doing than what those two could do against a great host.

2. Saul began to enquire of God, but soon desisted. His spirit was not come down so far, as to allow him to consult with Samuel, though, it is probable he was near him, for we read, *chap. xiii. 15.* that he was come to Gibeah of Benjamin, but he called for the ark, *ver. 18.* desiring to know, whether it would be safe for him to attack the Philistines, upon the disorder they perceived them to be in: Many will consult God about their safety, that would never consult him about their duty. But perceiving by his scouts that the noise in the enemy's camp increased, he commanded the priest that officiated, to break off abruptly, *withdraw thine hand,* *ver. 19.* consult no more, wait no longer for an answer: He was very unwise indeed, if (as some think) he forbade him to lift up his hand in prayer; for when Joshua was actually engaged with Amalek, Moses continued still to lift up his hands: It is rather a prohibition to his enquiring of the Lord, either, 1. Because now he thought he did not need an answer, the case was plain enough. And yet the more evident it was that God did all, the more reason he had to enquire, whether he would give him leave to do any thing. Or, 2. Because now he would not stay for it; he was in such haste to fight a falling enemy, that he would not stay to make an end of his devotions, nor to hear what answer God would give him. A little thing will divert a vain and carnal mind from religious exercise. He that believeth, will not make such haste as this, nor reckon any business so urgent, as not to allow time to take God along with him.

3. He, and all the little force he had, made a vigorous attack upon the enemy; all the people were cried together, so the word is, *ver. 20.* for want of silver trumpets, wherewith God appointed them to sound an alarm in the day of battle, *Numb. x. 9.* They summoned them together by shoutings, and their number was not so great, but that they might soon be got together. And now they seem bold and brave, when the work is done to their hands. Our Lord Jesus has conquered our spiritual enemies, routed and dispersed them, so that we are cowards indeed, if we will not stand to our arms, when it is only to pursue the victory and divide the spoil.

4. Every Hebrew, even those from whom one would least have expected it, now turned his hand against the Philistines. 1. Those that had deserted, and gone over to the enemy, and were among them, now fought against them, *ver. 21.* some think, they were such as had been taken prisoners by them, and now they were as goads in their sides: it rather seems, that they went in to them voluntarily, but, now they saw them falling, recovered the hearts of Israelites, and did valiantly for their country. 2. Those that had run their colours, and hid themselves in the mountains, returned to their posts, and joined in with their pursuers, *ver. 22.* hoping, by their great officiousness, now the danger was over, and the victory sure, to atone for their former cowardice. It was not much to their praise to appear now, but it would have been more their reproach, if they had not appeared. Those are remiss and faint-hearted indeed, that will not act in the cause of God, when they see it victorious, as well as righteous.

Thus all hands were at work against the Philistines, and every Israelite slew as many as he could, without sword or spear; yet it is said, *ver. 23.* it was the Lord that saved Israel that day. He did it by them, for without him they could do nothing. *Salvation is of the Lord.*

24. ¶ And the men of Israel were distressed that day: for Saul had adjured the people, saying, Cursed be the man that eateth any food until the evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies: So none of the people tasted

tasted *any* food. 25. And all *they* of the land came to a wood, and there was honey upon the ground. 26. And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped, but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath. 27. But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that *was* in his hand, and dipt in an honey-comb, and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes were enlightened. 28. Then answered one of the people, and said, Thy father straitly charged the people with an oath, saying, Cursed *be* the man that eateth *any* food this day. And the people were faint. 29. Then said Jonathan, My father hath troubled the land: see, I pray you, how mine eyes have been enlightened, because I tasted a little of this honey: 30. How much more, if haply the people had eaten freely to day of the spoil of their enemies which they found? for had there not been now a much greater slaughter among the Philistines? 31. And they smote the Philistines that day from Michmash to Ajalon: and the people were very faint. 32. And the people slew upon the spoil, and took sheep and oxen, and calves, and slew *them* on the ground: and the people did eat *them* with the blood. 33. ¶ Then they told Saul, saying, Behold the people sin against the LORD, in that they eat with the blood. And he said, Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day. 34. And Saul said, Disperse yourselves among the people, and say unto them, Bring me hither every man his ox, and every man his sheep, and slay *them* here, and eat; and sin not against the LORD in eating with the blood. And all the people brought every man his ox with him that night, and slew *them* there. 35. And Saul built an altar unto the LORD: the same was the first altar that he built unto the LORD.

We have here an account of the distress of the children of Israel, even in the days of their triumphs. Such allays are all present joys subject to. And such obstructions doth many a good cause meet with, even then when it seems most prosperous, through the mismanagements of instruments.

1. Saul forbade the people, under the penalty of a curse, to taste any food that day, *ver.* 24. Here we will suppose, (1.) That as king he had power to put his soldiers under this interdict, and to bind it on with a curse; and therefore they submitted to it, and God so far owned it, as to discover, by the lot, that Jonathan was the delinquent that had meddled with the accursed thing, though ignorantly, for which God would not be at that time enquired of by them. (2.) That he did it with a good intention, lest the people, who perhaps had been kept for some time at short allowance, when they found plenty of victuals in the deserted camp of the Philistines, should fall greedily upon that, and so lose time in pursuing the enemy, and some of them, it may be, glut themselves to that degree, as not to be fit for any more service that day. To prevent this he forbade them to taste any food, and laid himself, it is likely, under the same restraint. And yet his making this severe order was, 1. Impolitic, and very unwise; for if it gained time, it lost strength for the pursuit. 2. It was impious, and disobliging to the people, and worse than muzzling the mouth of the ox, when he treadeth out the corn. To forbid them to feast had been commendable, but to forbid them so much as to taste, though they were never so hungry, was barbarous. 3. It was impious, to enforce the prohibition with a curse and an oath. Had he no penalty less than an anathema, wherewith to support his military discipline? Death for such a crime had been too much, but especially death with a curse. Though superiors may chide and correct, they may not curse their inferiors; our rule is, *Elefs, and curse not.* When David speaks of an enemy he had that loved cursing, perhaps he meant Saul, *Psal.* cix. 17, 18.

2. The people observed his order, but it had many inconveniences attending it. 1. The soldiers were tantalised: for, in their pursuit of the enemy, it happened they went through a wood so full of wild honey, that it dropped from the trees upon the ground, the Philistines having perhaps in their flight, broke in upon the honey-combs, for their own refreshment, and left them running. Canaan flowed with honey, and here is an instance of it. They sucked honey out of the rock, the stony rock, *Deut.* xxxii. 13, yet for fear of the curse, they did not so much as taste the honey, *ver.* 25, 26. Those are worthy the names of Israelites, that can deny themselves and their own appetites, even then when they are most craving, and the delights of sense most tempting, for fear of guilt and a curse, and the table becoming a snare. Let us never feed ourselves, much less feast ourselves, without fear. 2. Jonathan fell under the curse through ignorance. He heard not of the charge his father had given, for having bravely forced the lines, he was then following the chase and therefore might justly be looked upon as exempted from the charge, and not intended in it. But it seems it was taken for granted, and he himself did not object against it afterwards, that it extended to him, though absent upon so good an occasion. He, not knowing any peril in it, took up a piece of a honey-comb, upon the end of his staff, and sucked it, *ver.* 27, and was sensibly refreshed by it, *his eyes were enlightened*, which began to grow dim through hunger and faintness; it made his countenance look pleasant and cheerful, for it was such as a slanderer might discern, *ver.* 29. *See how mine eyes have been enlightened.* He thought no harm, nor feared any till one of the people acquainted him with the order, and then he found himself in a snare. Many a good son has been thus entangled and distressed, more ways than one, by the rashness of an inconsiderate father: Jonathan for his part lost the crown he was heir to by his father's folly, which, it may be, this was an ill omen of. 3. The soldiers were faint, and grew feeble, in the pursuit of the Philistines. Jonathan foresaw this would be the effect of it, their spirits would flag, and their strength would fail for want of sustenance. Such is the nature of our bodies, that they soon grow unfit for service, if they be not supplied with fresh recruits. Daily work cannot be done without daily bread, which therefore our Father in heaven graciously gives us. It is bread that strengthens man's heart, therefore Jonathan reasoned very well, if the people had eaten freely, there had been a much greater slaughter, *ver.* 30. but, as it was

they were very faint, too much fatigued, so the Chaldee, and began to think more of their meat than of their work. 1. The worst effect of all was that at evening, when the restraint was taken off, and they returned to their food again, they were so greedy and eager upon it, that they eat the flesh with the blood, expressly contrary to the law of God, *ver.* 32. two hungry meals, we say, make the third a glutton; it was so here. They would not stay to have their meat either duly killed, for they slew them upon the ground, and did not hang them up, as they used to do, that the blood might all run out of them, or duly dressed, but fell greedily upon it, before it was half boiled or half roasted, *ver.* 32. Saul being informed of it, reproved them for the sin, *ver.* 34. *Ye have transgressed*, but did not, as he should have done, reflect upon himself as being accessory to it, and having made the Lord's people transgressors. To put a stop to this irregularity, Saul ordered them to set up a great stone before him, and let all that had cattle to kill, for their present use, bring them thither, and kill them under his eye upon that stone, *ver.* 33. and the people did so, *ver.* 34. so easily were they restrained and reformed, when their prince took care to do his part. If magistrates would but use their power as they might, people would be better than they are, with more ease than is imagined. Lastly, on this occasion Saul built an altar, *ver.* 35. that he might offer sacrifice, either by way of acknowledgement of the victory they had obtained, or by way of atonement for the sin they had been guilty of. The same was the first altar that he built, and perhaps the rolling of the great stone to kill the heifers on, minded him of converting it into an altar, else he had not thought of it. Saul was turning aside from God, and yet now he begins to build altars, being most zealous (as many are) for the form of godliness then when he was denying the power of it. See *Hosea* viii. 14. *Israel has forgotten his maker, and buildeth temples.* Some read it, he began to build that altar; he laid the first stone, but so hastily to pursue his victory, that he could not stay to finish it.

36. ¶ And Saul said, Let us go down after the Philistines by night, and spoil them until the morning light, and let us not leave a man of them. And they said, Do whatsoever seemeth good unto thee. Then said the priest, Let us draw near hither unto God. 37. And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day. 38. And Saul said, Draw ye near hither all the chief of the people: and know and see wherein this sin hath been this day. 39. For as the LORD liveth, which saveth Israel, though it be in Jonathan my son, he shall surely die. But *there was* not a man among all the people that answered him. 40. Then said he unto all Israel, Be ye on one side, and I and Jonathan my son will be on the other side. And the people said unto Saul, Do what seemeth good unto thee. 41. Therefore Saul said unto the LORD God of Israel, Give a perfect lot. And Saul and Jonathan were taken: but the people escaped. 42. And Saul said, Cast lots between me and Jonathan my son. And Jonathan was taken. 43. Then Saul said to Jonathan, Tell me what thou hast done. And Jonathan told him, and said, I did but taste a little honey with the end of the rod that *was* in mine hand, and lo I must die. 44. And Saul answered, God do so, and more also: for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan. 45. And the people said unto Saul, Shall Jonathan die, who hath wrought this great salvation in Israel? God forbid: as the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of his head fall to the ground; for he hath wrought with God this day. So the people rescued Jonathan, that he died not. 46. Then Saul went up from following the Philistines: and the Philistines went to their own place.

Here is, 1. Saul's speaking big against the Philistines; he proposed, as soon as his soldiers had got their suppers, to pursue them all night, and *not leave a man of them*, *ver.* 36. Here he shewed much zeal, but little discretion, for his army thus fatigued, could as ill want a night's sleep, as a meal's meat. But it is common for rash and foolish men, to consider nobody but themselves, and, so they may but have their humour, care not what hardships they put upon those that are under them. However, his people were so obsequious to their king, that they would by no means oppose the motion, but resolved to make the best of it, and, if he will go on, they will follow him. *Do whatsoever seemeth good to thee.* Only the priest thought it convenient to go on with the devotions that were broken off abruptly, *ver.* 37. and to consult the oracle, *Let us draw near hither unto God.* Princes and great men, have need of such about them, as will thus be their remembrancers, wherever they go, to take God along with them. And when the priest proposed it, Saul could not, for shame, reject the motion, but asked counsel of God, *ver.* 37. *Shall I go down after the Philistines? And shall I speed?*

2. His falling foul on his son Jonathan: and the rest of this paragraph is wholly concerning him; for while he is prosecuted, the Philistines make their escape. We know not what mischief may ensue one rash resolve.

1. God, by giving an intimation of his displeasure, put Saul upon searching for an accursed thing. When by the priest, he consulted the oracle, God answered him not, *ver.* 37. Note, when God denies our prayers, it concerns us to enquire what the sin is that hath provoked him to do so. *Let us see where the sin is*, *ver.* 38. for God's ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, but it is sin that separates between us and him. If God turns away our prayer, we have reason to suspect it is for some iniquity regarded in our hearts, which we are concerned to find out, that we may put it away, may mortify it, and put it to death. Saul swears by his maker, that whoever was the Achan that troubled the camp, by eating the forbidden fruit, should certainly die, though it were Jonathan himself, *i. e.* though never so dear to himself, and the people, little thinking that Jonathan was the man, *ver.* 39. *He shall surely die*, the curse shall be executed upon him. But none of the people answered him, *i. e.* none of those who knew Jonathan had broke the order, would inform against him.

2. Jonathan was discovered by lot to be the offender. Saul would have

lots cast between himself and Jonathan on the one side, and the people on the other, perhaps, because he was as confident of Jonathan's innocency in this matter as of his own, *ver. 40.* The people seeing him in a heat, durst not gainsay any thing he proposed, but acquiesced, *Do us seemeth good unto thee.* Before he cast lots, he prayed that *God would give him a perfect lot*, *ver. 41.* i. e. make a full discovery of this matter, or as it is in the margin, that he would shew the innocent. This was with an air of impartial justice. Judges should desire that truth may come out, whoever may suffer by it. Lots should be cast with prayer, because they are a solemn appeal to providence, and by them we beg of God to direct and determine us, *Acts i. 24.* for which reason some have condemned games, that depend purely upon lot or chance, as making too bold with a sacred thing. Jonathan at length was taken, *ver. 42.* Providence designing hereby to countenance and support a lawful authority, and to put an honour upon the administration of public justice in general, reserving another way to bring off one that had done nothing worthy of death.

3. Jonathan ingenuously confesseth the fact, and Saul, with an angry curse, passeth sentence upon him. Jonathan denies not the truth, nor goes about to conceal it, only he thinks it hard that he must die for it, *ver. 43.* He might very fairly have pleaded his invincible ignorance of the law, or have insisted upon his merit, but he submitted to the necessity with a great and generous mind. God's and his father's will be done: thus he shewed as much valour in receiving the messengers of death himself, as in sending them among the Philistines. It is as brave to yield in some cases, as it is in other cases to fight. Saul is not mollified by his filial submission, nor the hardness of his case, but as one that affected to be thought firm to his word, and much more to his oath, even then, when it bound him hardest, with another imprecation he gives judgment upon Jonathan, *ver. 44.* *God do so and more also to me, if I do not execute the law upon thee, for thou shalt surely die, Jonathan.* 1. He passed this sentence too hastily, without consulting the oracle; Jonathan had a very good plea in arrest of the judgment; what he had done was not *malum in se*; and for the prohibition of it, he was ignorant of that, so that he could not be charged with rebellion or disobedience. 2. He did it in fury. Had Jonathan been worthy to die, yet it had become a judge, much more a father, to pass sentence with tenderness and compassion, and not with such an air of triumph, like a man perfectly divested of all humanity and natural affection. Justice is debased, when it is administered with wrath and bitterness. 3. He backed it with a curse upon himself, if he did not see the sentence executed; and this curse did return upon his own head; Jonathan escaped, but God did so to Saul, and more also; for he was rejected of God, and made an anathema. Let none upon any occasion dare to use such imprecations as these, lest God lay Amen to them, and *make their own tongues to fall upon them*, *Psalm lxxiv. 8.* He that rolleth this stone, it will return upon him. Yet we have reason to think, that Saul's bowels yearned towards Jonathan, so that he really punished himself, and very justly, when he seemed so severe upon Jonathan; God made him feel the smart of his own rash edict, which might make him fear being again guilty of the like. By all these vexatious accidents, God did likewise correct him for his presumption, in offering sacrifice without Samuel. An expedition so ill begun, could not end without some rebukes.

4. The people rescued Jonathan out of his father's hands, *ver. 45.* Hitherto they had expressed themselves very observant of Saul, what seemed good to him they acquiesced in, *ver. 36—40.* but when Jonathan is in danger, Saul's word is no longer a law to them, but with the utmost zeal they oppose the execution of his sentence, *Shall Jonathan die?* That blessing, that darling of his country, Shall that life be sacrificed to a punctilio of law and honour, which was so bravely exposed for the public service, and to which we owe our lives and triumphs? No, we will never stand by and see him thus treated, whom God delights to honour. It is good to see Israelites zealous for the protection of those whom God has made instruments of public good. Saul had sworn that Jonathan should die, but they oppose their oath to his, and swear he shall not die; *As the Lord liveth, there shall not only not his head, but not a hair of his head fall to the ground*; they did not rescue him by violence, but by reason and resolution; and Josephus saith, they made their prayer to God, that he might be loosed from the curse. They plead for him, that *he hath wrought with God this day*; i. e. he has owned God's cause; and God has owned his endeavours, and therefore his life is too precious to be thrown away upon a nicety. We may suppose, Saul had not so perfectly forgot the relation of a father, but that he was willing enough to have Jonathan rescued, and well pleased to have that done, which yet he would not do himself: and he that knows the heart of a father, knows not how to blame him.

Lastly, The design against the Philistines is quashed by this ruffle, *ver. 46.* Saul went up from following them, and so an opportunity was lost of completing the victory. When Israel's shields are clashing with one another, the public safety and service suffers by it.

47. ¶ So Saul took the kingdom over Israel, and fought against all his enemies on every side, against Moab, and against the children of Ammon, and against Edom, and against the kings of Zobah, and against the Philistines: and whithersoever he turned himself, he vexed them. 48. And he gathered an host, and smote the Amalekites, and delivered Israel out of the hands of them that spoiled them. 49. Now the sons of Saul were Jonathan, and Ishui, and Melchishua: and the names of his two daughters were these; the name of the first-born Merab, and the name of the younger Michal: 50. And the name of Saul's wife was Ahinoam, the daughter of Ahimaaz: and the name of the captain of his host was Abner the son of Ner, Saul's uncle. 51. And Kish was the father of Saul; and Ner the father of Abner was the son of Abiel. 52. And there was fore war against the Philistines all the days of Saul: and when Saul saw any strong man, or any valiant man, he took him unto him.

Here is a general account of Saul's court and camp.

1. Of his court and family. The names of his sons and daughters, *ver. 49.* and of his wife, and his cousin-german, that was general of his army, *ver. 50.* There is mention of another wife of Saul's, *2 Sam. xxi. 8.* Rizpah, a secondary wife, and of the children he had by her.

2. Of his camp and military actions. 1. How he levied his army, *when he saw any strong valiant man*, that was remarkably fit for service, *he took him unto him*, *ver. 52.* as Samuel had told them the manner of the king would be, *chap. viii. 11.* and if he must have a standing army, it was his

prudence to fill up with the ablest men he could make choice of. 2. How he employed his army; he guarded his country against the insults of its enemies on every side, and prevented their incursions, *ver. 47, 48.* It is supposed, he acted only defensively against those that used to invade the border of Israel; and whithersoever he turned himself, as there was occasion, he vexed them, by checking and disappointing them. But the enemies he struggled most with, were the Philistines, with them he had fore war all his days, *ver. 52.* He had little reason to be proud of his royal dignity, nor had any of his neighbours cause to envy him, for he had little enjoyment of himself after he took the kingdom. He could not vex his enemies without some vexation to himself, such thorns are crowns quilted with.

C H A P. XV.

In this chapter we have the final rejection of Saul from being king, for his disobedience to God's command, in not utterly destroying the Amalekites. By his wars and victories, he hoped to magnify and perpetuate his own name and honour, but, by his mismanagement of them, he ruined himself, and laid his honour in the dust. Here is, 1. The commission God gave him to destroy the Amalekites, with a command to do it utterly, *ver. 1—3.* 2. Saul's preparation for this expedition, *ver. 4—6.* 3. His success, and partial execution of the commission, *ver. 7—9.* 4. His examination before Samuel, and sentence passed upon him, notwithstanding the many frivolous pleas he made to excuse himself, *ver. 10—31.* 5. The slaying of Agag, *ver. 32, 33.* 6. Samuel's final farewell to Saul, *ver. 34, 35.*

1. SAMUEL also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. 2. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. 3. Now go, and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. 4. And Saul gathered the people together, and numbered them in Telaim two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah. 5. And Saul came to a city of Amalek, and laid wait in the valley. 6. ¶ And Saul said unto the Kenites, Go depart, get you down from among the Amalekites, lest I destroy you with them: for ye shewed kindness to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt. So the Kenites departed from among the Amalekites: 7. And Saul smote the Amalekites from Havilah, until thou comest to Shur, that is over against Egypt. 8. And he took Agag the king of the Amalekites alive, and utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword. 9. But Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them: but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly.

Here, 1. Samuel, in God's name, solemnly requires Saul to be obedient to the command of God, and plainly intimates, that he was now about to put him upon a trial, in one particular instance, whether he would be obedient or no, *ver. 1.* And the making of this to expressly the trial of his obedience, did very much aggravate his disobedience. 1. He minds him of what God had done for him, *The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be a king.* God gave thee thy power, and therefore he expects thou shouldst use thy power for him. He put honour upon thee, and now thou must study how to do him honour. He made thee king over Israel, and now thou must plead Israel's cause, and avenge their quarrels. Thou art advanced to command Israel, but know that thou art a subject to the God of Israel, and must be commanded by him. Men's preferment, instead of discharging them from their obedience to God, obligeth them so much the more to it. Samuel had himself been employed to anoint Saul, and therefore was the fitter to be sent with these orders to him. 2. He tells him in general, that in consideration of this, whatever God commanded him to do, he was bound to do it. *Now therefore hearken to the voice of the Lord.* Note, God's favours to us lay strong obligations upon us, to be obedient to him. This we must render, *Psal. cxvi. 12.*

2. He appoints him a particular piece of service, in which he must now shew his obedience to God, more than in any thing he had done yet. Samuel promisseth God's authority to the command, *Thus saith the Lord of hosts*, the Lord of all hosts, of Israel's hosts: he also gives him a reason for the command, that the severity he must use might not seem hard, *I remember that which Amalek did to Israel*, *ver. 2.* God had an ancient quarrel with the Amalekites, for the injuries they did to his people Israel, when he brought them out of Egypt; we have the story, *Exod. xvii. 8.* and the crime is aggravated, *Deut. xxv. 18.* he basely smote the hindmost of them, and feared not God; God then swore, that he would have war with Amalek from generation to generation, and that in process of time he would utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek; this is the work that Saul is now appointed to do, *ver. 3.* *Go and smite Amalek.* Israel is now strong, and the measure of the iniquity of Amalek is now full, now go and make a full riddance of that devoted nation. He is expressly commanded to kill and slay all before him, both man and woman, infant and suckling, and not spare them out of pity; ox and sheep, camel and ass, and not spare them out of covetousness. Note, 1. Injuries done to God's Israel, will certainly be reckoned for sooner or later, especially the opposition given them, when they are coming out of Egypt. 2. God often bears long with those that are marked for ruin. The sentence past, is not executed speedily. 3. Though he bear long, he will not bear always. The year of recompence for the controversy of Israel will come at last. Though divine justice strikes slow, it strikes sure. 4. The longer judgment is delayed, many times the more severe it is when it comes. 5. God chooseth out instruments to do his work, that are fittest for it. This was bloody work, and therefore Saul must do it, that was a rough and severe man.

3. Saul hereupon musters his forces, and makes a descent upon the country of Amalek: it was a brave army that he brought into the field, *ver. 4. Two hundred thousand footmen.* When he was to engage the Philistines and the Amalekites, he had but six hundred attending him, *chap. xiii. 15.* but now he was to attack the Amalekites, by express order from heaven, in which he was sure of victory, he had thousands at his call. But whatever it was at other times, it was not now for the honour of Judah, that their forces were numbered by themselves, for their quota was scandalously short, look what was the reason, but a twentieth part of the whole, for they were but ten thousand, when the other ten tribes (for I except Levi) brought into the field two hundred thousand. The day of Judah's honour drew near, but was not yet come. Saul numbered them in Telaim, which signifies lambs. He numbered them *like lambs*, to the vulgar Latin; numbered them *by the paschal lambs*, to the Chaldee, allowing ten to a lamb, a way of numbering used by the Jews in the latter times of their nation. Saul drew all his forces to the city of Amalek, that city that was their metropolis, *ver. 5.* that he might provoke them to give him battle.

4. He gave a friendly advice to the Kenites, to separate themselves from the Amalekites, among whom they dwelt, while this execution was in doing, *ver. 6.* herein he did prudently and piously, and, it is probable, according to the direction Samuel gave him. The Kenites were of the family and kindred of Jethro, Moses's father-in-law, a people that dwelt in tents, which made it easy to them, upon every occasion, to remove to other lands not appropriated; many of them, at this time, dwelt among the Amalekites, where, though they dwelt in tents, they were fortified by nature, for they put their nest in a rock, hardy people that could live any where, and affected tallness, *Numb. xxiv. 21.* Balaam had there foretold, that they should be wasted, *ver. 22.* however, Saul must not waste them. But, 1. He acknowledges the kindness of their ancestors to Israel, when they came out of Egypt. Jethro and his family had been very helpful and serviceable to them in their passage through the wilderness, had been to them instead of eyes, and this is remembered to their posterity many ages after. Thus a good man leaves the divine blessing for an inheritance to his children's children, those that come after us may be reaping the benefit of our good works when we are in our graves. God is not unrighteous to forget the kindnesses shewn to his people; but they shall be remembered another day, at furthest in the great day, and recompensed in the resurrection of the just; *I was an hundred, and ye gave me meat.* God's remembering the kindness of the Kenites ancestors, in favour to them, at the same time when he was punishing the injuries done to the ancestors of the Amalekites, helped to clear the righteousness of God in that dispensation. If he entail favours, why may he not entail frowns? He espouseth his people's cause, so as to bless those that bless them; and therefore so as to curse those that curse them. *Numb. xxiv. 9. Gen. xii. 3.* They cannot requite the kindnesses, nor avenge the injuries done them themselves, but God will do both. 2. He desires them to remove their tents from among the Amalekites: *Go, depart, get you down from among them.* When destroying judgments are abroad, God will take care to separate between the precious and the vile, and to hide the meek of the earth in the day of his anger. It is dangerous being found in the company of God's enemies, and our duty and interest to come out from among them, lest we share in their sins and plagues, *Rev. xviii. 4.* The Jews have a saying, *wo to the wicked man, and wo to his neighbour.*

5. Saul prevailed against the Amalekites, for it was rather an execution of condemned malefactors, than a war with contending enemies; the issue could not be dubious when the cause was just, and the call so clear; *He smote them, ver. 7. utterly destroyed them, ver. 8.* Now they paid dear for the sin of their ancestors; God sometimes *lays up iniquity for the children.* They were idolaters, and were guilty of many other sins, for which they deserved to fall under the wrath of God; yet when God would reckon with them, he fastened upon the sin of their ancestors in abusing his Israel, as the ground of his quarrel. Lord, How unsearchable are thy judgments, yet how incontestible is thy righteousness!

6. Yet he did his work by the halves, *ver. 9.* 1. He spared Agag, because he was a king like himself, and, perhaps, in hope to get a great ransom for him. 2. He spared the best of the cattle, and destroyed only the refuse, that was good for little. Many of the people, we may suppose, made their escape, and took their effects with them into other countries, and therefore we read of Amalekites after this, but that could not be helped; it was Saul's fault that he did not destroy such as came to his hands, and were in his power. That which was now destroyed, was, in effect, sacrificed to the justice of God, as the God to whom vengeance belongeth; and for Saul to think the torn and the sick, the lame and the lean, good enough for that, while he reserved for his own fields, and his own table, the firstlings and the fat, was really to honour himself more than God.

10. ¶ Then came the word of the LORD unto Samuel, saying, 11. It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king, for he is turned back from following me, and hath not performed my commandments. And it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night. 12. And when Samuel rose early to meet Saul in the morning, it was told Samuel, saying, Saul came to Carmel, and behold, he set him up a place, and is gone about, and passed on, and gone down to Gilgal. 13. And Samuel came to Saul: and Saul said unto him, Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. 14. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? 15. And Saul said, They have spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God, and the rest we have utterly destroyed. 16. Then Samuel said unto Saul, Stay, and I will tell thee what the LORD hath said to me this night. And he said unto him, Say on. 17. And Samuel said, When thou wast little in thine own sight, wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the LORD anointed thee king over Israel? 18. And the LORD sent thee on a journey, and said, Go, and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites, and fight against them until they be consumed. 19. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the LORD, but didst fly upon the spoil, and

didst evil in the sight of the LORD? 20. And Saul said unto Samuel, Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and have gone the way which the LORD sent me, and have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21. But the people took of the spoil, sheep, and oxen, the chief of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God in Gilgal. 22. And Samuel said, Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice: and to hearken, than the fat of rams. 23. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry: because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

Saul is here called to account by Samuel, concerning the execution of his commission against the Amalekites; and remarkable instances we are here furnished with of the strictness of the justice of God, and the treachery and deceitfulness of the heart of man. We are here told,

1. What passed between God and Samuel in secret upon this occasion, *ver. 10, 11.* (1.) God determines Saul's rejection, and acquaints Samuel with it. *It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king.* Repentance in God is not as it is in us, a change of his mind, but a change of his method or dispensation. He doth not alter his will, but wills an alteration. The change was in Saul, *he is turned back from following me;* this construction God put upon the partiality of his obedience, and the prevalency of his covetousness. And hereby he did himself make God his enemy. God repented that he had given Saul the kingdom, and the honour and power that belonged to it; but he never repented that he had given any man wisdom and grace, and his fear and love; those gifts and callings of God are without repentance. (2.) Samuel laments and deprecates it. *It grieved Samuel* that Saul had forfeited God's favour, and that God had resolved to cast him off; and he cried unto the Lord all night, spent a whole night in interceding for him, that this decree might not go forth against him. When others were in their beds sleeping, he was upon his knees praying and wrestling with God. He did not thus deprecate his own exclusion from the government; nor was he secretly pleased, as many a one would have been, that Saul, who succeeded him, was so soon laid aside, but, on the contrary, prayed earnestly for his establishment; so far was he from desiring that woful day. The rejection of sinners is the grief of good people: God delights not in their death, nor should we.

2. What passed between Samuel and Saul in public. Samuel being sent of God to him with these heavy tidings, went, as Ezekiel, in bitterness of soul, to meet him; perhaps, according to an appointment, when Saul went forth on this expedition, for Saul was come to Gilgal, *ver. 13.* the place where he was made king, *chap. xi. 14.* and where now he had been confirmed, if he had approved himself well in this trial of his obedience. But Samuel was informed that Saul had, (1.) Set him up a triumphal arch, or some monument of his victory at Carmel, a city in the mountains of Judah, seeking his own honour more than the honour of God, for he set up this place (or *hand*, as the word is) for himself: he had more need to have been repenting of his sin and making his peace with God, than boasting of his victory. (2.) That he was marched in great state to Gilgal, for that seems to be intimated in the manner of expression, he is *gone about, and passed on and gone down*, with a great deal of pomp and parade. There Samuel gave him the meeting.

1. Saul makes his boast to Samuel of his obedience, because that was the thing by which he was now to signalize himself, *ver. 13. Blessed be thou of the Lord, for thou sendest me upon a good errand, in which I have had great success, and I have performed the commandment of the Lord.* It is very likely, if his conscience had not flown in his face at this time, and charged him with disobedience, he would not have been so forward to proclaim his obedience; for by this he hoped to prevent Samuel's reproving him. Thus sinners think, by justifying themselves, to escape being judged of the Lord; whereas the only way to do that is by *judging ourselves.* They that brag most of their religion, may justly be suspected of partiality and hypocrisy in it.

2. Samuel convicts him by a plain demonstration of his disobedience. Hast thou performed the commandment of the Lord? *What means then the bleating of the sheep?* *ver. 14.* Saul would needs have it thought, that God Almighty was wonderfully beholden to him for the good service he had done; but Samuel shews him, that God was so far from being a debtor to him, that he had just cause of action against him, and produceth for evidence the *bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen*, which, perhaps, Saul appointed to bring up the rear of his triumph, but Samuel appeals to them as witnesses against him; he need not go far to disprove him. The noise the cattle made, like the *rust of the silver*, *Jam. v. 3.* would be a witness against him. Note, It is no new thing for the plausible professions and protestations of hypocrites, to be contradicted and disproved by the most plain and undeniable evidence. Many boast of their obedience to the command of God, but what means then their indulgence of the flesh, their love of the world, their passion and uncharitableness, and their neglect of holy duties, which witness against them?

3. Saul insists upon his own justification against this charge, *ver. 15.* The fact he cannot deny, the sheep and oxen were brought from the Amalekites. But, 1. It was not his fault, for the people spared them, as if they durst have done it without the express orders of Saul, when they knew it was against the express orders of Samuel. Note, Those that are willing to justify themselves, are commonly very forward to condemn others, and to lay the blame upon any, rather than take it to themselves. Sin is a brat that nobody cares to have laid at their doors. It is the sorry subtilty of an impenitent heart that will not confess its guilt, to lay the blame on those that were either tempters, or partners, or only followers of it. 2. It was with a good intention: it was to sacrifice to the Lord thy God: he is thy God, and thou wilt not be against any thing that is done, as this is, for his honour. This was a false plea, for both Saul and the people designed their own profit in sparing the same: But if it had been true, it had been frivolous, for God hates robbery for burnt-offering; God appointed these cattle to be sacrificed to him in the field, and therefore will give those no thanks that bring them to be sacrificed at his altar; for he will be served in his own way, and according to the rule he himself hath prescribed. Nor will a good intention justify a bad action.

4. Samuel over-rules, or rather over-looks his plea, and proceeds, in God's name, to give judgment against him. He premiseth his authority; what he was about to say was what the Lord had said to him, *ver. 16.* otherwise

otherwise he would have been far from passing so severe a censure upon him. Those who complain their ministers are too harsh with them, should remember, that while they keep to the word of God they are but messengers, and must say as they are bidden; and therefore be willing, as Saul himself here was, that they should *say on*; he delivers his message faithfully, 1. He minds him of the honour God had done him in making him king, ver. 17. *when he was little in his own sight*. God regarded the lowliness of his state, and rewarded the lowliness of his spirit. Note, Those that are advanced to honour and wealth ought often to remember their mean beginnings, that they may never think highly of themselves, but always study to do great things for the God that has advanced them. 2. He lays before him the plannets of the orders he was to execute, ver. 18. *The Lord sent thee on a journey*; so easy was the service, and so certain the success, that it was rather to be called a journey, than a war: the work was honourable, to destroy the sworn enemies of God and Israel; and had he denied himself, and set aside the consideration of his own profit, so far as to have destroyed all that belonged to Amalek, he should be no loser by it at last, nor go this *warfare on his own charges*; God would, no doubt, have made it up to him, so that he should have no need of spoil. And therefore, 3. He shews him how excusable he was in aiming to make a hand of this expedition, and to enrich himself by it, ver. 19. *Wherefore then didst thou fly upon the spoil*, and convert that to thine own use which was to have been destroyed for God's honour? See what evil the love of money is the root of, but see what is the sinfulness of sin, and that in it which above any thing else makes it evil in the sight of the Lord, it is disobedience; *thou didst not obey the voice of the Lord*, 5. Saul repeats his vindication of himself, as that which, in defiance of conviction, he resolved to abide by, ver. 20, 21. he denies the charge, ver. 20. *Yea, I have obeyed*, I have done all I should do, for he had done all which he thought he needed to do, so much wiser was he in his own eyes than God himself; God bid him kill all, and yet he puts in among the instances of his obedience, that he had brought Agag alive, which he thought was as good as if he had killed him. Thus carnal deceitful hearts think to excuse themselves from God's commandments with their own equivalents. He insists upon it that he has *utterly destroyed the Amalekites themselves*, which was the main thing intended; but as to the spoil, he owns it should have been *utterly destroyed*; so that he knew his *Lord's will*, and was under no mistake about the command: but he thought that would be willful waste, the cattle of the Midianites was taken for a prey in Moses' time, *Numb. xxxi. 22.* and why not the cattle of the Amalekites now? Better it should be a prey to the Israelites, than to the fowls of the air and the wild beasts; and therefore he connived at the people in carrying it away; but it was their doing, and not his; and besides, it was for *sacrifice to the Lord* here at Gilgal, whither they were now bringing them. See what a hard thing it is to convince the children of disobedience of their sin, and to strip them of their fig-leaves.

6. Samuel gives a full answer to his apology, since he did insist upon it, ver. 22, 23. He appeals to his own conscience, *Hath the Lord as great delight in sacrifices as in obedience*; Though Saul was not a man of any great acquaintance with religion, yet he could not but know this; 1. That nothing is so pleasing to God as obedience, no, not sacrifice and offering, and the fat of rams. See here what we should aim at and endeavour in all the exercises of religion, even acceptance with God, that he may delight in what we do. If God be well pleased with us and our services, we are happy, we have gained our point, but otherwise *to what purpose is it?* Isa. i. 11. Now, here we are plainly told, that humble, sincere, and conscientious obedience to the will of God, is more pleasing and acceptable to him than *all burnt-offerings and sacrifices*. A careful conformity to moral precepts recommends us to God more than all ceremonial observances, *Mic. vi. 6, 7, 8.* Obedience is enjoined by the eternal law of nature, but sacrifice supposeth sin come into the world, and is but a feeble attempt to take that away which obedience would have prevented. God is more glorified, and less more denied, by obedience than by sacrifice. It is much easier to bring a bullock or a lamb to be burnt upon the altar, than to bring *every high thought into obedience* to God, and the will subject to his will. Obedience is the glory of angels, *Psal. ciii. 20.* and it will be ours. 2. That nothing is so provoking to God as disobedience, setting up our wills in competition with his. This is here called *rebellion and stubbornness*, and is said to be as bad as *witchcraft and idolatry*, ver. 23. It is as bad to set up other gods as to live in disobedience to the true god. They that are governed by their own corrupt inclinations in opposition to the command of God, do, in effect, consult the *Teraphim* (as the word here is for idolatry), or the diviners. It was disobedience that made us all sinners, *Rom. v. 19.* and this is the malignity of sin, that it is the *transgression of the law*, and consequently it is *enmity to God*, *Rom. viii. 7.* Saul was a king, but if he disobey the command of God, his royal dignity and power will not excuse him from the guilt of rebellion and stubbornness. It is not the rebellion of the people against their prince, but of a prince against God, that this text speaks of.

Lastly, He reads his doom, in short, *Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath despised it*, to the Chaldee, *hast made nothing of it*, to the Seventy, *hast cast off the government of it*; therefore he has *rejected thee*, despised and made nothing of thee, but cast thee off *from being king*. He that made thee King has determined to unmake thee again. Those are unfit and unworthy to rule over men, who are not willing that God should rule over them.

24. ¶ And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. 25. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD. 26. And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee: for thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. 27. And as Samuel turned about to go away, he laid hold upon the skirt of his mantle, and it rent. 28. And Samuel said unto him, The LORD hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, *that is better than thou*. 29. And also the strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent, for he is not a man that he should repent. 30. Then he said, I have sinned: yet honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people, and

before Israel, and turn again with me, that I may worship the LORD thy God. 31. So Samuel turned again after Saul, and Saul worshipped the LORD.

Saul is at length brought to put himself into the dress of a penitent; but it is too evident, that he only acts the part of a penitent, and is not one indeed.

Observe, 1. How poorly he expressed his repentance. It was with much ado that he was made sensible of his fault, and not till he was threatened with being deposed; that touched him in a tender part, then he began to relent; and not till then; when Samuel told him he was *rejected from being king*, then he said, *I have sinned*, ver. 24. His confession was not free nor ingenuous but extorted by the rack, and forced from him.

Several ill signs here are of the hypocrisy of his repentance, and that it came short even of Ahab's.

1. He made his application to Samuel only, and seemed most solicitous to stand right in his opinion, and to gain his favour. He makes a little god of him, only to preserve his reputation with the people, because they all knew Samuel to be a prophet, and the man that had been the instrument of his preferment. Thinking it would please Samuel, and be a sort of a bribe to him, he puts it into his confession, *I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy word*; as if he had been in God's stead, ver. 24. David, though convinced by the ministry of Nathan, yet in his confession has his eye to God alone; not to Nathan, *Psal. li. 4.* *Against thee, thee only have I sinned*: but Saul ignorantly enough confesseth his sin as a transgression of Samuel's word; whereas his word was no other than a declaration of the commandment of the Lord. He also addresseth to Samuel for forgiveness, ver. 25, *I pray thee, pardon my sin*, as if any could forgive sin but God only. Those wretchedly deceive themselves who when they are fallen into scandalous sin, think it enough to make their peace with the Church and their ministers, by the shews and plausible profession of repentance, without taking care to make their peace with God by the sincerity of it. The most charitable construction we can put on this of Saul here, is to suppose, that he looked upon Samuel as a sort of mediator between him and God, and intended an address to God in his application to him; however, it was very weak.

2. He excused his fault even in this confession of it, and that is never the fashion of a true penitent, ver. 24. *I did it, because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice*. We have reason enough to think that it was purely his own doings, and not the people's; however, if they were forward to do it, it is plain, by what we have read before, that he knew how to keep up his authority among them. So that the excuse was false and frivolous; whatever he pretended, he did not really fear the people: but it is common for sinners, in excusing their faults, to plead the thoughts and workings of their own minds, because those are things, which, how groundless soever, no man can disprove; but they forget that God searcheth the heart.

3. All his care was to save his credit, and preserve his interest in the people, lest they should revolt from him, or at least despise him; therefore he courts Samuel with so much earnestness, ver. 25. to turn again with him, and assist in a public thanksgiving for the victory; very importunate he was in this matter when he laid hold on the skirt of his mantle to detain him, ver. 27. not that he cared for Samuel, but he feared if Samuel forsook him, the people would do so too. Many seem zealously affected to good ministers and good people, only for the sake of their own interest and reputation, while in heart they hate them. But this expression was very gross when he said, ver. 30. *I have sinned, yet honour me, I pray thee, before my people*. Is this the language of a penitent? No, but the contrary; *I have sinned*, shame me now, for to me belongs shame, and no man can loathe me so much as I loathe myself. Yet how often do we meet with the copies of this hypocrisy of Saul. It is very common for those who are convicted of sin, to shew themselves very solicitous to be honoured before the people. Whereas he that has lost the honour of an innocent, can pretend to no other but that of a penitent, and it is the honour of a penitent to take shame to himself.

2. How little he got by these thin shews of repentance. What point did he gain by them?

1. Samuel repeated the sentence past upon him, so far was he from giving him any hopes of the repeal of it, ver. 26. the same with ver. 23. *He that covers his sin shall never prosper*, Prov. xxviii. 13. Samuel refused to turn back with him, but *turned about to go away*, ver. 27. As the thing appeared to him upon the first view, he thought it altogether unfit for him to far to countenance one whom God had rejected, as to join with him in giving thanks to God for a victory, which was made to serve rather Saul's covetousness than God's glory. Yet afterwards he did turn again with him, ver. 31. upon further thoughts, and probably, by divine direction, either to prevent a mutiny among the people, or perhaps not to do honour to Saul (for though Samuel worshipped the Lord, ver. 31. it is not said Samuel presided in that worship) but to do justice on Agag, ver. 32.

2. He illustrated the sentence by a sign, which Saul himself, by his rudeness, gave occasion for. When Samuel was turning from him he tore his clothes to detain him, ver. 27. so loth was he to part with the prophet; but Samuel put a construction upon this accident which none but a prophet could do, he made it to signify the *rending of the kingdom* from him, ver. 28. and that, like this, was his own doings. He hath rent it from thee, and given it to a neighbour better than thou, viz. to David, who afterwards, upon an occasion, cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, 1 Sam. xxiv. 5. upon which Saul said, ver. 20. *I know that thou shalt surely be king*, perhaps, remembering this sign, the tearing of the skirt of Samuel's mantle.

3. He ratified it by a solemn declaration of its being irreversible, ver. 29. *The strength of Israel will not lie*: The eternity, or victory of Israel, so some read it; the holy One, so the Arabic; the most noble One, so the Syriac; the triumphant king of Israel, so Bishop Patrick; he is determined to depose thee, and he will not change his purpose: *He is not a man that he should repent*. Men are fickle and alter their minds, feeble and cannot effect their purposes; something happens which they cannot foresee, by which their measures are broke; but with God it is neither so, nor so. God hath sometimes repented of the evil which he thought to have done, upon the sinner's repenting; but here repentance was hid from Saul, and therefore hid from God's eyes.

32. ¶ Then said Samuel, Bring ye hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites: and Agag came unto him delicately. And Agag said, Surely the bitterness of death is past. 33. And Samuel said, As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women. And Samuel hewed

hewed Agag in pieces before the LORD in Gilgal. 34. ¶ Then Samuel went to Ramah; and Saul went up to his house to Gibeah of Saul. 35. And Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death: nevertheless, Samuel mourned for Saul: and the LORD repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.

Samuel, as a prophet, is here set over kings, *Jer. i. 10.*

1. He destroys king Agag, doubtless by such special direction from heaven, as none now can pretend to. He *hewed Agag in pieces*; some think he only ordered it to be done; or, perhaps, he did it with his own hands, as a sacrifice to God's injured justice, *ver. 33.* and sacrifices used to be cut in pieces. Now observe in this,

(1.) How Agag's present vain hopes were frustrated. He came delicately, in a stately manner, to shew that he was a king, and therefore to be treated with respect; or, in a soft effeminate manner, as one never used to hardship, that could not set the sole of his foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy, *Deut. xxviii. 56.* to move compassion; and he said, surely now the heat of the battle is over, *the bitterness of death is past.* *ver. 32.* having escaped the sword of Saul, that man of war, he thought he was in no danger from Samuel, an old prophet, a man of peace. Note, 1. There is bitterness in death, it is terrible to nature. *Surely death is bitter*, so divers versions read those words of Agag; as the Seventy read the former clause, *He came trembling*; death will dismay the stoutest heart. (2.) Many think the bitterness of death is past when it is not so; they put that evil day far from them which is very near. True believers may, through grace, lay this upon good grounds, though death be not past, the bitterness of it is, *O death, where is thy sting?*

(1.) How his former wicked practices were now punished. Samuel calls him to account, not only for the sins of his ancestors, but his own sins, *thy sword has made women childless*, *ver. 33.* He trod in the steps of his ancestors' cruelty, and those under him, it is likely, did the same; justly therefore is all the righteous blood shed by Amalek required of this generation, *Matt. xxiii. 36.* Agag that was delicate and luxurious himself, was cruel and barbarous to others; it is commonly so, those that are indulgent of their appetites are no less indulgent of their passions. But blood will be reckoned for, even kings must account to the King of kings for the guiltless blood they shed, or cause to be shed. It was that crime of king Manasseh which the Lord would not pardon, *2 Kings xxiv. 4.* See *Rev. xiii. 10.*

2. He deserts king Saul, takes leave of him, *ver. 34.* and never came any more to see him, *ver. 35.* to advise or assist him in any of his affairs, because Saul did not desire his company, nor would he be advised by him. He looked upon him as rejected of God, and therefore he forsook him; though he might sometimes see him accidentally, as *chap. xix. 24.* yet he never came to see him out of kindness or respect. Yet he mourned for Saul, thinking it a very lamentable thing, that a man who stood so fair for great things, should ruin himself so foolishly. He mourned for the ill state of the country, to which Saul was likely to have been so great a blessing, but now would prove a curse and a plague. He mourned for his everlasting state, having no hopes of bringing him to repentance: when he wept for him it is likely he made supplication, but the Lord had repented that he had made Saul king, and resolved to undo that work of his, so that Samuel's prayers prevailed not for him. Observe, we must mourn for the rejection of sinners, 1. Though we withdraw from them, and dare not converse familiarly with them. Thus the prophet determines to leave his people and go from them, and yet to *weep day and night for them*, *Jer. ix. 1, 2.* 2. Though they do not mourn for themselves. Saul seems unconcerned at the tokens of God's displeasure he was under, and yet Samuel mourns day and night for him. Jerusalem was secure when Christ wept over it.

C H A P. XVI.

At this chapter begins the story of David, one that makes us great a figure in the sacred story, as almost any of the worthies of the Old Testament; one that both with his sword and with his pen served the honour of God and the interests of Israel, as much as most ever did, and was as illustrious a type of Christ. Here, 1. Samuel is appointed and commissioned to anoint a king among the sons of Jesse at Beth-lehem, *ver. 1—5.* 2. All his elder sons are passed by, and David the youngest is pitched upon and anointed, *ver. 6—13.* 3. Saul growing melancholy David is pitched upon by music to relieve him, *ver. 14—23.* Thus small are the beginnings of that great man.

1. AND the LORD said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Beth-lehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons. 2. And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the LORD said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice, to the LORD. 3. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee. 4. And Samuel did that which the LORD spake, and came to Beth-lehem: and the elders of the town trembled at his coming, and said, Comest thou peaceably? 5. And he said, Peaceably; I am come to sacrifice unto the LORD: sanctify yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice. And he sanctified Jesse and his sons, and called them to the sacrifice.

Samuel was retired to his own house in Ramah, with a resolution not to appear any more in public business, but to addict himself wholly to the instructing and training up the sons of the prophets over whom he presided as we find *chap. xix. 20.* he promised himself more satisfaction in young prophets than in young princes; and we do not find that, to his dying day, No. XLIII.

God called him out to any public action relating to the state, but only here to anoint David.

1. God reproves him for continuing so long to mourn for the rejection of Saul. He doth not blame him for mourning on that occasion, but for exceeding in his sorrow, *How long wilt thou mourn for Saul?* *ver. 1.* We do not find that he mourned at all for the setting aside of his own family and the depoling his own sons; but for the rejection of Saul and his seed he mourns without measure, for the former was done by the peoples foolish discontent, this by the righteous wrath of God. Yet he must find time to take up, and not go mourning to his grave, (1.) Because God has rejected him, and he ought to acquiesce in the divine justice, and forget his affection to Saul; if God will be glorified in his ruin, Samuel ought to be satisfied. Besides to what purpose should he weep? The decree is gone forth, and all his prayers and tears cannot prevail for the reversing of it, *2 Sam. xii. 22, 23.* (2.) Because Israel shall be no loser by it, and Samuel must prefer the public welfare before his own private affection to his friend. Mourn not for Saul, for I have provided me a king. The people provided them a king and he proved ill, now I will provide me one, a man of mine own heart. See *Psal. lxxxix. 20. Acts xiii. 22.* If Saul be rejected, yet Israel shall not be as sheep having no shepherd: I have another in store for them, let thy joy of him swallow up thy grief for the abdicated prince.

3. He sends to Beth-lehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse, a person probably not unknown to Samuel. Fill thine horn with oil. Saul was anointed with a glass vial of oil, scanty and brittle, David with a horn of oil, which was more plentiful and durable; hence we read of a *horn of salvation in the house of his servant David.* *Luke i. 69.*

3. Samuel objects the peril of going on this errand, *ver. 2.* If Saul hear it he will kill me. By this it appears, (1.) That Saul was grown very wicked and outrageous since his rejection, else Samuel would not have mentioned this. What impiety would he not be guilty of, who durst kill Samuel? (2.) That Samuel's faith was not so strong as one would have expected, else he had not thus feared the rage of Saul. Would not he that sent him protect him and bear him out? But the best men are not perfect in their faith, nor will fear be wholly cast out any where on this side heaven. But this may be understood as Samuel's desire of direction from heaven how to manage this matter prudently, so as not to expose himself, or any other more than needed.

4. God orders him to cover his design with a sacrifice. Say, I am come to sacrifice, and it was true he did, and it was proper that he should, when he came to anoint a king, *chap. xi. 15.* As a prophet he might sacrifice, when and where God appointed him; and it was not at all inconsistent with the laws of truth to say, he came to sacrifice, when really he did so, though he had also a further end, which he thought fit to conceal. Let him give notice of a sacrifice, and invite Jesse and his family, who, it is probable, was the principal man of the city, to come to the feast upon the sacrifice; and, faith God, I will shew thee what thou shalt do. Those that go about God's work, in God's way, shall be directed step by step, wherever they are at a loss, to do it in the best manner.

5. Samuel went accordingly to Beth-lehem, not in pomp, or with any retinue, only a servant to lead the heifer, which he was to sacrifice; yet the elders of Beth-lehem trembled at his coming, fearing it was an indication of God's displeasure against them, and that he came to denounce some judgment for the iniquities of the place; guilt causes fear. Yet indeed it becomes us to stand in awe of God's messengers, and to tremble at his word: or they feared it might be an occasion of Saul's displeasure against them, for probably they knew how much he was exasperated at Samuel, and feared he would pick a quarrel with them for entertaining him. They asked him, Comest thou peaceably? Art thou in peace thyself, and not flying from Saul? Art thou at peace with us, and not come with any message of wrath? We should all covet earnestly to stand upon good terms with God's prophets, and dread having the word of God, or their prayers, against us. When the Son of David was born king of the Jews, all Jerusalem was troubled, *Matt. ii. 3.* Samuel kept at home, and it was a strange thing to see him so far from his own house, they therefore concluded, it must needs be some extraordinary occasion that brought him, and feared the worst till he satisfied them, *ver. 5.* I come peaceably, for I come to sacrifice, not with a message of wrath against you, but with the methods of peace and reconciliation; and therefore you may bid me welcome, and need not fear my coming; therefore sanctify yourselves, and prepare to join with me in the sacrifice, that you may have the benefit of it. Note, Before solemn ordinances, there must be a solemn preparation. When we are to offer spiritual sacrifices, it concerns us, by sequestering ourselves from the world, and renewing the dedication of ourselves to God, to sanctify ourselves. When our Lord Jesus came into the world, though men had reason enough to tremble, fearing that his errand was to condemn the world, yet he gave full assurance that he came peaceably, for he came to sacrifice, and he brought his offering along with him; a body hast thou prepared me; let us sanctify ourselves, that we may have an interest in his sacrifice. Samuel said, I come peaceably, for I come to sacrifice. Note, Those that come to sacrifice, should come peaceably; religious exercises must not be performed tumultuously.

6. He had a particular regard to Jesse and his sons, for with them his private business lay, with which, it is likely, he acquainted Jesse at his first coming, and took up his lodgings at his house. He spoke to all the elders to sanctify themselves, but he sanctified Jesse and his sons, by praying with them, and instructing them. Perhaps he had acquaintance with them before, and it appears, *chap. xx. 29.* where we read of the sacrifices that family had, that it was a devout religious family: Samuel assisted them in their family preparations for the public sacrifice, and it is probable, chose out David, and anointed him, at the family solemnities, before the sacrifice was offered, or the holy feast solemnized. Perhaps he offered private sacrifices, like Job, according to the number of them all, *Job i. 3.* and under colour of that, called for them all to appear before him. When signal blessings are coming into a family, they ought to sanctify themselves.

6. ¶ And it came to pass, when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the LORD's anointed is before him. 7. But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looked on the heart. 8. Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel: and he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this. 9. Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by: and he said, Neither hath the LORD chosen this. 10. Again Jesse made seven of his sons to pass before Samuel; and Samuel said unto Jesse, The

LORD hath not chosen these. 11. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all *thy* children? and he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and behold, he keepeth the sheep. And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. 12. And he sent and brought him in: Now *he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to.* And the LORD said, Arise, anoint him: for this *is* he. 13. Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the LORD came upon David, from that day forward: so Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

If the sons of Jesse were told, that God would provide himself a king among them, as he had said, *ver. 1.* we may well suppose they all made the best appearance they could, and each hoped he should be the man; but here we are told,

1. How all the elder sons were passed by, who stood fairest for the preferment. Eliab, the eldest, was privately presented first to Samuel, probably, none being present but Jesse only, and Samuel thought he must needs be the man, *ver. 6.* *Surely this is the Lord's anointed.* The prophets themselves, when they spake from under the divine direction, were as liable to mistake as other men; as Nathan, *2 Sam. vii. 3.* But God rectified the prophet's mistake, by a secret whisper to his mind, *ver. 7.* *Look not on his countenance.* It was strange, Samuel, that had been so wretchedly disappointed in Saul, whose countenance and stature recommended him as much as any man's could, should be so forward to judge of a man by that rule. When God would please the people with a king, he chose a proper man, but when he would have one after his own heart, he should not be chosen by the outside; men judge by the sight of the eyes, but God doth not, *Iju. xi. 3.* *The Lord looks on the heart; i. e. 1.* He knows it. We can tell how men look, but he can tell what they are. Man looks on the eyes, so the original word is, and is pleased with the liveliness and sprightliness that appears in them; but God looks on the heart, and sees the thoughts and intents of that. 2. He judges of men by it. The good disposition of the heart, the holiness and goodness of that recommends us to God, and is *in his sight of great price*, *1 Pet. iii. 4.* not the majesty of the look, or the strength and stature of the body; let us reckon that true beauty which is within, and judge of men as far as we are capable, by their minds, not their mien.

When Eliab was set aside, Abinadab and Shammai, and after them four more of the sons of Jesse, seven in all, were presented to Samuel, as likely for his purpose, but Samuel, who now attended more carefully than he did at first to the divine direction, laid them all by. *The Lord hath not chosen these*, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* Men dispose of their honours and estates to their sons, according to their seniority of age, and priority of birth, but God doth not. *The elder shall serve the younger.* Had it been left to Samuel, or Jesse, to make the choice, one of these had certainly been chosen; but God will magnify his sovereignty, in passing by some that were most promising, as well as fastening on others that were less so.

2. How David at length was pitched upon. He was the youngest of all the sons of Jesse; his name signifies beloved, for he was a type of the beloved Son. Observe,

2. How he was now employed. He was in the fields *keeping the sheep*, *ver. 11.* and was left there, though there was a sacrifice and a feast at his father's house. The youngest used to be the fondlings of the family, but it should seem David was least set by of all the sons of Jesse; either they did not discern, or did not duly value, the excellent spirit he was of. Many a great genius lies buried in obscurity and contempt; and God often exalts those whom men despise, and giveth abundant honour to that part which *lucketh*. The Son of David was he whom men despised, *the stone which the builders refused*, and yet has a name above every name. David was taken from following the ewes, to feed Jacob, *Pal. lxxviii. 71.* as Moses from keeping the flock of Jethro. An instance of his humility and industry, both which God delights to put honour upon. We should think a military life, but God saw a pastoral life, which gives advantage for contemplation and communion with heaven, the best preparative for kingly power, at least for those graces of the Spirit, which are necessary to the due discharge of that trust which attends it. David was keeping sheep, though it was a time of sacrifice; for there is mercy that takes place of sacrifice.

2. How earnest Samuel was to have him sent for. *We will not sit down to meat* (perhaps it was not the feast upon the sacrifice, but a common meal) *till he come hither*; for if all the rest be rejected, this must be he. He that was designed not to sit at table at all, is now stayed for as the principal guest. If God will exalt them of low degree, who can hinder?

3. What appearance he made when he did come. No notice is taken of his clothing, no doubt, that was according to his employment, mean and coarse, as shepherds' coats used to be, and he did not change his clothes as Joseph did, *Gen. xli. 14.* but he had a very honest look, not stately, as Saul's, but sweet and lovely; *he was ruddy, of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to*, *ver. 12.* *i. e.* he had a clear complexion, a good eye, and a lovely face; the features extraordinary, and something in his looks that was very charming. Though he was so far from using any art to help his beauty, that his employment exposed it to the sun and wind, yet nature kept its own, and by the sweetness of his aspect gave manifest indications of an amiable temper and disposition of mind. Perhaps his modest blush, when he was brought before Samuel, and received by him with surprising respect, made him look much the handsomer.

4. The anointing of him. The Lord told Samuel, in his ear, (as he had done, *chap. ix. 15.*) that this was he whom he must anoint, *ver. 12.* Samuel objects not the meanness of his education, his youth, or the little respect he had in his own family, but in obedience to the divine command took his horn of oil and anointed him, *ver. 13.* signifying thereby, 1. A divine designation to the government after the death of Saul, of which hereby he gave him a full assurance. Not that he was at present invested with the royal power, but it was intailed upon him, to come to him in due time. 2. A divine communication of gifts and graces, to fit him for the government, and make him a type of him who was to be the Messiah, the anointed One, who received the Spirit, not by measure, but without measure. He is said to be anointed in the midst of his brethren, who yet possibly did not understand it as a designation to the government, and thereby did not envy David, as Joseph's brethren did him; because they saw no further marks of dignity put upon him, no, not so much as a coat of divers colours. But Bishop Patrick reads it, he anointed him from the midst of his brethren, *i. e.* he singled him out from the rest, and privately anointed him, but with a charge to keep his own counsel, and not to let his own brethren know it, as by what we find, *chap. xvii. 28.* it should seem, Eliab did not. It is computed, that David was now about twenty years old, if so, his troubles by

Saul lasted ten years, for he was thirty years old when Saul died: Dr. Lightfoot reckons him to be about twenty-five, and that his troubles lasted but five years.

5. The happy effects of this anointing, the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward, *ver. 13.* The anointing of him, was not an empty ceremony, but a divine power went along with that instituted sign, and he found himself inwardly advanced in wisdom and courage and concern for the public, with all the qualifications of a prince, though not at all advanced in his outward circumstances. This would abundantly satisfy him that his election was of God. The best evidence of our being predestinated to the kingdom of glory, is our being sealed with the Spirit of promise, and our experience of a work of grace in our own hearts. Some think his courage, by which he slew the lion and the bear, and his extraordinary skill in music, were the effects and evidences of the Spirit's coming upon him. However this made him the sweet psalmist of Israel, *2 Sam. xxiii. 1.* Samuel having done this, went to Ramah in safety, and we never read of him again but once, *chap. xix. 18.* till we read of his death; now he retired to die in peace, since his eyes had been seen in salvation, even the scepter brought into the tribe of Judah.

14. ¶ But the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an spirit evil from the LORD troubled him. 15. And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. 16. Let our lord now command thy servants which are before thee, to seek out a man who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. 17. And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. 18. Then answered one of his servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters; and a comely person, and the LORD is with him. 19. ¶ Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep. 20. And Jesse took an ass laden with bread, and a bottle of wine, and a kid, and sent them by David his son unto Saul. 21. And David came to Saul, and stood before him; and he loved him greatly, and he became his armour-bearer. 22. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, Let David, I pray thee, stand before me: for he hath found favour in my sight. 23. And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.

We have here Saul falling, and David rising.

1. Here is Saul made a terror to himself; *ver. 14.* *The spirit of the Lord departed from him.* He having forsaken God and his duty, God, in a way of righteous judgment, withdrew from him those assistances of the good Spirit with which he was directed, animated, and encouraged in his government and wars. He lost all his good qualities. This was the effect of his rejecting God, and an evidence of his being rejected by him. Now God took his mercy from Saul, as it is expressed, *2 Sam. vii. 15.* for when the Spirit of the Lord, departs from us, all good goes. When men grieve and quench the Spirit, by wilful sin, he departs, and will not always strive. The consequence of this was, that an evil spirit from God troubled him. They that drive the good Spirit away from them, do of course become a prey to the evil spirit. If God and his grace do not rule us, sin and Satan will have possession of us. The devil, by the divine permission, troubled and terrified Saul, by means of the corrupt humours of his body and passions of his mind. He grew fretful and peevish and discontented; timorous and suspicious, starting and trembling ever and anon; he was sometimes, saith Josephus, as if he had been choked or strangled, and a perfect demoniac by fits. This made him unfit for business, precipitate in his counsels, the contempt of his enemies, and a burden to all about him.

2. Here is David made a physician to Saul, and by that means brought to court; a physician that helped him against the worst of diseases, when none else could. David was newly anointed privately to the kingdom, it would be of use to him to go to court, and see the world; it is here brought about for him, without any contrivance of his own or his friends. Note, Those whom God designs for any service, his providence shall concur with his grace to prepare and qualify them for it.

Saul is discomposed; his servants have the honesty and courage to tell him what his discomposure was, *ver. 15.* *an evil spirit*, not by chance but from God and his providence, troubleth thee. Now,

1. The means they all advise him to for his relief, was music, *ver. 16.* Let us have a cunning player on the harp to attend thee. How much better friends had they been to him if they had advised him, since the evil spirit was from the Lord, to give all diligence to make his peace with God by true repentance, to send for Samuel to pray with him, and to intercede with God for him, then might he not only have had some present relief, but the good Spirit would have returned to him. But their project is to make him merry and so cure him. Many whose consciences are convinced and startled, are for ever ruined by such methods as these, which drown all care of the soul in the delights of sense. Yet Saul's servants did not amiss to send for music, as a help to cheer up the spirits, if they had but withal sent for a prophet to give him good counsel. And (as Bishop Hall observes) it was well they did not send for a witch or diviner, by his enchantments to cast out the evil spirit; which has been the abominable wicked practice of some that have worn the Christian name, who consult the devil in their distresses, and make hell their refuge. Those who thus agree with Satan, it will be no less than a miracle of divine grace if ever they break off from him again.

2. One of his servants recommended David to him, as a fit person to be employed in the use of these means, little imagining that he was the man whom Samuel meant, when he told Saul of a neighbour of his better than he that should have the kingdom, *chap. xv. 28.* It is a very high character which this servant of Saul's here gives of David, *ver. 18.* that he was not only fit for his purpose, as a comely person, and cunning in playing, but a man of courage and conduct, a mighty valiant man, and prudent in matters,

matters, fit to be further preferred, (and which crowned his character) *the Lord is with him*. By this it appears, that though David, after he was anointed, returned to his country business, and there remained on his head no marks of the oil, so careful was he to keep that secret, yet the workings of the Spirit signified by the oil, could not be hid, but made him shine in obscurity, so that all his neighbours observed with wonder the great improvements of his mind on a sudden. David, even in his shepherd's weeds, is become an oracle, a champion, and every thing that is great. His fame reached the court presently, for Saul was inquisitive after such young men, *chap. xiv. 52*. When the Spirit of God comes upon a man, he will make his face to shine.

3. David is hereupon sent for to court. And it seems,

1. His father was very willing to part with him, sent him very readily, and a present with him to Saul, *ver. 20*. the present was according to the usage of those times, bread and wine, compare *chap. x. 3, 4*. therefore acceptable, because expressive of the homage and allegiance of him that sent it. Probably Jesse, who knew what his son David was designed for, was aware that providence was not herein sitting him for it, and therefore he would not force providence by sending him to court uncalled, yet he followed providence very cheerfully, when he saw it plainly putting him into the way of preferment. Some suggest, that when Jesse received that message, *Send me David thy son*, he began to be afraid that Saul had got some intimation of his being anointed, and sent for him to do him a mischief, and therefore Jesse sent him a present to pacify him; but it is probable, whoever brought the message gave him an account of what design he was sent for.

2. Saul took a great kindness to him, *ver. 21*. *loved him greatly*, and designed to make him his armour-bearer, and (contrary to the manner of the king, *chap. xvi. 11*.) asked his father's leave to keep him in his service, *ver. 22*. *Let David, I pray thee, stand before me*. And good reason he had to respect him, for he did him a great deal of service with his music, *ver. 23*. His instrumental music with his harp is only mentioned, but it should seem, by the account Josephus gives of it, that he added vocal music to it, and sung hymns, probably divine hymns, songs of praise to his harp. David's music was Saul's physic. 1. Music has a natural tendency towards the composing and exhilarating of the mind, when it is disturbed and saddened. Elisha used it for the calming of his spirits, *2 Kings iii. 15*. On some it has a greater influence and effect than on others, and probably Saul was one of those. Not that it charmed the evil spirit, but it made his spirit sedate, and allayed those tumults of the animal spirits by which the devil had advantage against him. The beams of the sun (it is the learned Bochart's comparison) cannot be cut with a sword, quenched with water, or blown out with wind; but by closing the window-shutters, they may be kept out of the chamber. Music cannot work upon the devil, but it may shut up the passages by which he had access to the mind. 2. David's music was extraordinary, and in mercy to him, that he might gain a reputation at court, as one that had the Lord with him. God made his performances in music more successful, in this case, than others would have been. Saul found, even after he had conceived an enmity to David, that no one else could do him the same service; *chap. xix. 9, 10*. which was a great aggravation of his outrage against him. It is pity music, which may be so serviceable to the good temper of the mind, should ever be abused by any to the support of vanity and luxury, and made an occasion of drawing the heart away from God and serious things: if that be to any the effect of it, it drives away the good spirit, not the evil spirit.

C H A P. XVII.

David is the man whom God now delights to honour, for he is a man after his own heart. We read in the foregoing chapter, how, after he was anointed, providence made him famous in the court; we read in this chapter, how providence made him much more famous in the camp, and, by both, not only marked him for a great man, but fitted him for the throne to which he was designed. In the court he was only Saul's physician, but in the camp Israel's champion; there he fairly fought and beat Goliath of Gath. In the story observe, 1. What a figure Goliath made, and how daringly he challenged the armies of Israel, ver. 1—11. 2. What a mean figure David made, when providence brought him to the army, ver. 12—30. 3. The unparalleled bravery wherewith David undertook to encounter this Philistine, ver. 31—39. 4. The pious resolution with which he attacked him, ver. 40—47. 5. The glorious victory he obtained over him with a sling and a stone, and the advantage which the Israelites thereby gained against the Philistines, ver. 48—54. 6. The great notice which was hereupon taken of David at court, ver. 55—58.

1. **N**OW the Philistines gathered together their armies to battle, and were gathered together to Shochoh, which *belongeth* to Judah, and pitched between Shochoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. 2. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together, and pitched by the valley of Elah, and set the battle in array against the Philistines. 3. And the Philistines stood on a mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other side: and *there was* a valley between them. 4. ¶ And there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height *was* six cubits and a span; 5. And he had an helmet of brass upon his head, and he *was* armed with a coat of mail: and the weight of the coat *was* five thousand shekels of brass. 6. And he had greaves of brass upon his legs, and a target of brass between his shoulders. 7. And the staff of his spear *was* like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head *weighed* six hundred shekels of iron: and one bearing a shield went before him. 8. And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? *am* not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. 9. If he be able to fight with me, and to kill me, then will we be your servants: but if I prevail against him,

and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us. 10. And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day: give me a man that we may fight together. 11. When Saul and all Israel heard those words of the Philistine, they were dismayed, and greatly afraid.

It was not long ago that the Philistines were soundly beaten, and put to the worse before Israel, and had been totally routed, if Saul's rashness had not prevented; but here we have them making head again. Observe,

1. How they *defied Israel with their armies*, *ver. 1*. They made a descent upon the Israelites country, and possessed themselves, as it should seem, of some part of it, for they encamped in a place *which belongeth to Judah*. Israel's ground had never been tooing for Philistine armies, if Israel had been faithful to their God. The Philistines (it is probable) had heard that Samuel had fallen out with Saul, and forsaken him, and no longer assisted and advised him, and that Saul was grown melancholy, and unfit for business, and that encouraged them to make this attempt, for the retrieving of the credit they had lately lost. The enemies of the Church are watchful to take all advantages, and they never have greater advantages, than when her protectors have provoked God's Spirit and prophets to leave them. Saul mustered his forces, and faced them, *ver. 2, 3*. And here we must take notice, 1. That the evil spirit for the present had left Saul, *chap. xvi. 23*. David's harp having given him some relief, perhaps, the alarms and affairs of the war prevented the return of the distemper. Business is a good antidote against melancholy. Let the mind have something without to fasten on and employ itself about, and it will be the less in danger of prying upon itself. God, in mercy to Israel, suspended the judgment for a while; for how distracted must the affairs of the public have been, if, at this juncture, the prince had been distracted? 2. That David for the present was returned to Beth-lehem, and had left the court, *ver. 15*. When Saul had no further occasion to use him for the relief of his distemper, though, being anointed, he had a very good private reason, and, having a grant of the place of Saul's armour-bearer, he had a very plausible pretence to have continued his attendance, as a retainer to the court, yet he went home to Bethlehem, and returned, to keep his father's sheep; this was a rare instance, in a young man that stood so fair for preferment, of humility and affection to his parents. He knew better than most do, how to come down again after he had begun to rise, and strangely preferred the retirements of a pastoral life before all the pleasures and gaieties of the court. None more fit for honour than he, nor that deserved it better, and yet none more dead to it.

2. How they *defied Israel with their champion Goliath*, whom they were almost as proud of as he was of himself, hoping by him to recover their reputation and dominion. Perhaps the army of the Israelites were superior in number and strength to that of the Philistines, which made the Philistines decline a battle, and stand at a bay with them, desiring rather to put the issue upon a single combat, in which, having such a champion, they hoped to gain the victory. Now concerning the champion, observe,

1. His prodigious size. He was of the sons of Anak, who at Gath kept their ground in Joshua's time, *Josh. xi. 22*. and kept up a race of giants there, of which Goliath was one, and it is probable one of the largest. He was in height *six cubits and a span*, *ver. 4*. The learned Bishop Cumberland has made it out, that the scripture cubit was about twenty-one inches, (above three inches more than our half-yard) and a span was half a cubit, by which computation Goliath wanted but eight inches of four yards in height, eleven feet and four inches. A monstrous stature, and which made him very formidable, especially if he had strength and spirit proportionable.

2. His armour; art, as well as nature made him terrible. He was well fixed with defensive armour, *ver. 5, 6*. *a helmet of brass on his head, a coat of mail*, made of brass plates laid over one another, like the scales of a fish; and because his legs would lie most within the reach of an ordinary man, he wore brass boots, and a large crocket of brass about his neck. The coat is said to weigh five thousand shekels, and a helmet was half an ounce avoirdupois. A vast weight for a man to carry, all the other parts of his armour being proportionable. But some think it should be translated, not the weight of the coat, but the value of it, was five thousand shekels: so much it cost. His offensive weapons were extraordinary, of which his spear only is here described, *ver. 7*. it was like a weaver's beam; his arm could manage that, which an ordinary man could scarce heave. His shield only, which was the lightest of all his accoutrements, was carried before him by his esquire, probably for state; for he that was clad in brass, little needed a shield.

3. His challenge. The Philistines having chosen him for their champion, to save themselves from the hazard of a battle, he here throws down the gauntlet, and bids defiance to the armies of Israel, *ver. 8, 9, 10*. He came into the valley that lay between the camps, and his voice probably, being as much stronger than other peoples, as his arm was, he cried so as to make them all hear him, *Give me a man that we may fight together*. He looks upon himself with admiration, because he was so much taller and stronger than all about him; his heart (saith Bishop Hall) nothing but a lump of proud flesh. He looks upon Israel with disdain, because they had none among them of such a monstrous bulk, and defies them to find a man among them, bold enough to enter the list with him. 1. He upbraids them with the folly of drawing an army together. *Why are you come to set the battle in array?* How dare you oppose the mighty Philistines? Or, what need the two armies engage when the controversy may be sooner decided, with only the expence of one life, and the hazard of another? 2. He offers to put the war entirely upon the issue of the duel he proposeth. If your champion kill me, we will be your servants: if I kill him, you shall be ours. This, saith Bishop Patrick, was only a bravado, for no nation would be willing thus to venture its all upon the success of one man, nor is it justifiable; notwithstanding Goliath's stipulation here, when he was killed the Philistines did not stand to his word, nor submit themselves servants to Israel. When he boasts *I am a Philistine and you servants of Saul*, he would have thought it a great piece of condescension in him, who was a chief ruler, to enter the lists with an Israelite; for he looked on them as no better than slaves. The Chaldee paraphrase brings him in boasting, that he was the man that had killed Hophni and Phinehas, and taken the ark prisoner; but the Philistines had never given him so much as the command of a regiment in recompence of his services, whereas Saul had been made king for his services: let him therefore take up the challenge.

4. The terror this struck upon Israel, *ver. 11*. *Saul and all his army were greatly afraid*. The people had not been dismayed, but that they observed Saul's courage failed him; and it is not to be expected, that if the leader be a coward the followers should be bold. We found before, when the Spirit of the Lord came upon Saul, *chap. xi. 6*. none could be more daring, nor forward, to answer the challenge of Nahab the Ammonite; but now the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him, even the big looks and big words of a single Philistine make him change colour. But where was Jonathan

Jonathan all this while? Why did not he accept the challenge, who in the last war had so bravely engaged a whole army of Philistines? Doubtless he felt not himself stirred up of God to it, as he did then. As the best, so the bravest men, are no more than what God makes them. Jonathan must now sit still, because the honour of engaging Goliath is reserved for David. In great and good actions, the wind of the Spirit blows when and where he listeth. Now the pious Israelites lament their king's breach with Samuel.

12. ¶ Now David was the son of that Ephrathite of Beth-lehem-judah, whose name was Jesse, and he had eight sons: and the man went among men for an old man in the days of Saul. 13. And the three eldest sons of Jesse went, and followed Saul to the battle: and the names of his three sons that went to the battle, were Eliab the first-born, and next unto him, Abinadab, and the third Shammah. 14. And David was the youngest: and the three eldest followed Saul. 15. But David went, and returned from Saul, to feed his father's sheep at Beth-lehem. 16. And the Philistine drew near, morning and evening, and presented himself forty days. 17. And Jesse said unto David his son, Take now for thy brethren an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to thy brethren. 18. And carry these ten cheefes into the captain of *their* thousand, and look how thy brethren fare, and take their pledge. 19. Now Saul, and they, and all the men of Israel were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. 20. ¶ And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle. 21. For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army. 22. And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and run into the army, and came and saluted his brethren. 23. And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion (the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name) out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard them. 24. And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were fore afraid. 25. And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel. 26. And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God? 27. And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him. 28. And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men: and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why comest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down, that thou mightest see the battle. 29. And David said, What have I now done? *Is there not a cause?* 30. ¶ And he turned from him toward another, and spake after the same manner: and the people answered him again after the former manner.

Forty days the two armies lay encamped facing one another, each advantageously posted, but neither forward to engage. Either they were parleying, and treating of an accommodation, or waiting for recruits: and perhaps there were frequent skirmishes between parties of both sides. All this while twice a day, morning and evening, did the insulting champion appear in the field, and repeat his challenge; his own heart growing more and more proud for his not being answered, and the people of Israel more and more timorous; while God designed hereby to ripen him for destruction, and to make Israel's deliverance the more illustrious. All this while David is keeping his father's sheep, but at the end of forty days, providence brings him to the field to win and wear the laurel, which no other Israelite dares venture for.

We have in these verses,

1. The present state of his family. His father was old, *ver. 12. he went among men for an old man*, was taken notice of for his great age, above what was usual at that time, and therefore had his quietus from public services, and went not in person to the wars, but sent his sons; he had the honours paid him that were due to his age, his hoary head was a crown of glory to him. David's three elder brethren, who perhaps envied his place at the court, got their father to send for him home, and let them go to the camp, where they hoped to signalize themselves and eclipse him, *ver. 13, 14.* while David himself was so far from being proud of the services he had done his prince, or ambitious of further preferment, that he not only returned from court to the obscurity of his father's house, but to the care and toil, and, (as it proved, *ver. 34.*) the peril of *keeping his father's sheep*. It was the praise of this humility, that it came after he had the honour of a courtier; and the reward of it, that it came before the honour of a conqueror; *before honour is humility*. Now he had that opportunity of meditation and prayer, and other acts of devotion, which fitted him for what he was destined to, more than all the military exercises of that inglorious camp could do.

2. The orders his father gave him to visit his brethren in the camp. He did not himself ask leave to go to satisfy his curiosity, or to gain experience and make observations: but his father sent him on a mean and homely errand, which any of his servants might have done. He must carry some bread and cheefe to his brethren, ten loaves with some parched corn, for themselves, *ver. 17.* and ten cheefes, which it seems he thought too good for them, but for a present to their colonel, *ver. 18.* David must still be the drudge of the family, though he was to be the greatest ornament of it. He had not so much as an als at command to carry his load, but must take it on his back, and yet run to the camp. Jesse, we thought, was privy to his being anointed, and yet industriously kept him thus mean and obscure, probably, to hide him from the eye of suspicion and envy, knowing he was anointed to a crown in reversion. He must observe how his brethren fared, whether they were not reduced to short allowance, now the encampment continued so long, that if need were he might send them more provisions. And he must take their pledge, *i. e.* if they had pawned any thing, he must esteem it: take notice of their company, to some observe, who they associate with, and what sort of life they lead; perhaps, David, like Joseph, had formerly brought to his father their evil report, and now he sends him to inquire concerning their manners. See the care of pious parents about their children, when they are abroad from them, especially in places of temptation, they are solicitous how they carry themselves, and particularly what company they keep: Let children think of this, and carry themselves accordingly, remembering, that when they are from under their parents eye, they are still under God's eye.

3. David's dutiful obedience to his father's command. His prudence and care made him be up early, *ver. 20.* and yet not leave his sheep without a keeper, so faithful was he in a few things, and therefore the fitter to be made ruler over many things; and so well had he learnt to obey, before he pretended to command. God's providence brought him to the camp very seasonably, when both sides had set the battle in array, and, as it should seem, were more likely to come to an engagement than they had yet been of all the forty days, *ver. 21.* Both sides were now preparing to fight. Jesse little thought of sending his son into the army just at that critical juncture, but the wise God orders the time and all the circumstances of actions and affairs, so as to serve his designs of securing the interests of Israel, and advancing the man after his own heart. Now observe here,

1. How brisk and lively David was, *ver. 22.* What carriage he brought he honestly took care of, and left it with those that had the charge of the bag and baggage; but though he had come a long journey with a great load, he *ran into the army*, to see what was a doing there, and to pay his respects to his brethren. *Seest thou a man thus diligent in his business, he is in the way of preferment, he shall stand before kings.*

2. How bold and daring the Philistine was, *ver. 23.* Now the armies were drawn out into a line of battle, he appeared first to renew his challenge, vainly imagining that he was in the eager chase of his own glory, and triumph, whereas really he was but counting his own destruction.

3. How timorous and faint-hearted the men of Israel were. Though they had for forty days together been used to his haughty looks and threatening language, and, having seen no execution done by either, might have learned to despise both; yet upon his approach they *fled from him, and were fore afraid*, *ver. 24.* One Philistine could never thus have chased a thousand Israelites, and put ten thousand to flight, unless their rock, being treacherously forsaken by them, had justly *judged them, and shut them up*, *Deut. xxxii. 30.*

4. How high Saul bid for a champion. Though he was the tallest of all the men of Israel, and, if he had not been so, while he kept close to God, might safely have taken up the gauntlet which this insolent Philistine threw down himself, yet the Spirit of the Lord being departed from him, he durst not do it, nor press Jonathan to do it: but whoever will do it shall have as good a preferment as he can give him, *ver. 25.* If the hope of wealth and honour will prevail with any man to expose himself so far, it is proclaimed, that the bold adventurer, if he come off, shall marry the king's daughter, and have a good portion with her: but as it should seem, whether he come off or no, his *father's house shall be free in Israel*, from all toll, tribute, custom, and services to the crown; or shall be ennobled and advanced to the peerage.

5. How much concerned David was to assert the honour of God and Israel against the impudent challenges of this champion. He asked what reward was promised to him that should slay this Philistine, *ver. 25.* though he knew already, not because he was ambitious of the honours, but because he would have it taken notice of, and reported to Saul, how much he resented the indignity hereby done to Israel and Israel's God. He might have presumed so far upon his acquaintance and interest at court, as to have gone himself to Saul to offer his service; but his modesty would not let him do that; it was one of his rules, before it was one of his sons proverbs, *Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men*, *Prov. xxv. 6.* yet his zeal put him upon that method, which, he hoped, would bring him into this great engagement. Two considerations, it seems, fired David with a holy indignation. 1. That the challenger was one that was uncircumcised, a stranger to God, and out of covenant with him. 2. That the challenge were the armies of the living God, devoted to him, employed by him and for him, so that the affronts done to them, reflected upon the living God himself, and that he cannot bear. When therefore some had told him, what was the reward proposed for killing the Philistine, *ver. 27.* he asked others, *ver. 30.* with the same resentment, which he expected would at length come to Saul's ear.

6. How he was brow-beaten and discouraged by his elder brother Eliab, who taking notice of his forwardness, fell into a passion upon it, and gave David very abusive language, *ver. 28.* Consider it, 1. As the fruit of Eliab's jealousy. He was the eldest brother, and David the youngest and perhaps, it had been customary with him (as it is with too many elder brothers) to trample upon him, and take every occasion to chide him. But they who thus exalt themselves over their juniors, may perhaps live to see themselves by a righteous providence abased, and those whom they are abusive to exalted. Time may come, when the elder may serve the younger. But Eliab was now vexed, that his younger brother shall speak those bold words against the Philistine, which he himself durst not say. He knew what honour David had had already in the court, and if he should now get him honour in the camp, (from which he thought he had found means effectually to exclude him, *ver. 15.*) the glory of his elder brother would be eclipsed and stained; and therefore (such is the nature of jealousy) he would rather Goliath should triumph over Israel, than that David should be the man that should triumph over him. *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who can stand before envy?* especially the envy of a brother, which Jacob, and Joseph, and David here experienced the keenness of? See *Prov. xviii. 19.* It is very ill favoured language that Eliab here gives him; not only unjust and unkind, but at this time basely ungrateful; for David was now sent by his father, as Joseph by his, on a kind visit to his brethren. Eliab intended, in what he said, not only to grieve and discourage David himself, and quench that noble fire he perceived glowing in his breast, but to represent him to those about him as an idle proud lad, not fit

to be taken notice of. He gives them to understand that his business was only to keep sheep, and falls insinuates that he was a careless unfaithful shepherd; though he had left his charge in good hands, *ver. 20.* yet he must tauntingly be asked, *With whom hast thou left these few sheep?* Though he came down now to the camp in obedience to his father and kindness to his brethren, and Eliah knew it, yet this turned to his reproach; thou art come down not to do any service, but to gratify thy own curiosity, and only to look about thee; and from thence he will infer *the pride and naughtiness of his heart*, and pretends to know it as certainly as if he were in his bosom: David could appeal to God concerning his humility and sincerity, *Psal. xvii. 3. cxxxi. 1.* and at this time gave proofs of both, and yet could not escape this hard character from his own brother. See the folly, absurdity, and wickedness of a proud and envious passion; how groundless its jealousies are, how unjust its censures, how unfair its representations, how bitter its invectives, and how indecent its language. God, by his grace, keep us from such a spirit! 2. As a trial of David's meekness, patience, and constancy; a sharp trial it was, and he approved himself well in it: for (1.) He bore the provocation with an admirable temper, *ver. 29. What have I now done?* what fault have I committed, for which I should thus be chidden? *Is there not a cause* for my coming to the camp, when my father sent me? *Is there not a cause* for my resenting the injury done to Israel's honour by Goliath's challenge? He had right and reason on his side, and knew it, and therefore did not render railing for railing, but with a soft answer turned away his brother's wrath. This conquest of his own passion was, in some respects, more honourable than that of Goliath. *He that hath rule over his own spirit, is better than the mighty.* It was no time for David to quarrel with his brother, when the Philistines were upon them. The more threatening the Church's enemies are, the more bearing her friends should be with one another. (2.) He broke through the discouragement with an admirable resolution. He would not be driven off from his thoughts of engaging the Philistine, by the ill-will of his brother. Those that undertake great and public services, must not think it strange if they be discountenanced and opposed by those, from whom they had reason to expect support and assistance; but must humbly go on with their work in the face not only of their enemies threats, but of their friends slights and suspicions.

31. And when the words were heard which David spake, they rehearsed them before Saul: and he sent for him. 32. ¶ And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine. 33. And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine, to fight with him; for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth. 34. And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock. 35. And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard, and smote him, and slew him. 36. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. 37. David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee. 38. ¶ And Saul armed David with his armour, and he put an helmet of brass upon his head, also he armed him with a coat of mail. 39. And David girded his sword upon his armour, and he assayed to go, for he had not proved it: and David said unto Saul, I cannot go with these: for I have not proved them. And David put them off him.

David is at length presented to Saul for his champion, *ver. 31.* and he bravely undertakes to fight the Philistine, *ver. 32. Let no man's heart fail because of him;* it would have reflected too much upon the valour of his prince if he had said, *Let not thy heart fail,* therefore he speaks generally, *Let no man's heart fail.* A little shepherd, come but this morning from keeping sheep, has more courage than all the mighty men of Israel, and encourageth them. Thus doth God often send good words to his Israel, and do great things for them by the weak and foolish things of the world. David only desires a commission from Saul to go and fight with the Philistine, but saith nothing to him of the reward he had proposed, because that was not the thing he was ambitious of, but only the honour of serving God and his country: Nor would he seem to question Saul's generosity.

Two things David had to do with Saul.

1. To get clear of the objection Saul made against his undertaking. Alas, saith Saul, Thou hast a good heart on it, but art by no means an equal match for this Philistine; to engage with him is to throw away a life which may better be reserved for more agreeable services: *Thou art but a youth,* rash and inconsiderate, weak and unversed in arms. He is the man that has the head and hands of a man, *a man of war,* trained up and inured to it from his youth, *ver. 33.* and how canst thou expect but that he will be too hard for thee?

David, as he had answered his brother's passion with meekness, so he answered Saul's fear with faith, and gives a reason of the hope which was in him, that he should conquer the Philistine to the satisfaction of Saul. We have reason to fear that Saul had not great acquaintance with, or regard to, the word of God, and therefore David, in reasoning with him, fetched not his arguments and encouragements from thence, how much soever he had an eye to that in his own mind; but he argues from experience, though he was but a youth and never in the war, yet perhaps he had done as much as the killing of Goliath came to, for he had had by divine assistance spirit enough to encounter, and strength enough to subdue a lion once, and another time a bear that robbed him of his lambs, *ver. 34, 35, 36.* to these he compares this uncircumcised Philistine, looks upon him to be as much a ravenous beast as either of them, and therefore doubts not but to deal as easily with him; and hereby gives Saul to understand, that he was not so unexperienced in hazardous combats as he took him to be.

1. He tells his story like a man of mettle, he is not ashamed to own that he kept his father's sheep, which his brother had just now upbraided him with.

with, so far was he from concealing it, that from his employment as a shepherd, he fetches the experiences that now animated him. But he lets those about him know that he was no ordinary shepherd. Whatever our profession or calling is, be it never so mean, we should labour to excel in it, and do the business of it in the best manner. When David kept sheep, (1.) He approved himself very careful and tender of his flock, though it was not his own, but his father's. He could not see a lamb in distress but he would venture his life to rescue it. This temper made him fit to be a king, to whom the lives of the subjects should be dear, and their blood precious, *Psal. lxii. 14* and fit to be a type of Christ, the good shepherd, who *gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them in his bosom*, *Ila. xl. 11.* and who not only ventured but *laid down his life for the sheep.* And fit to be an example to ministers, with the utmost care and diligence to watch for souls, that they be not a prey to the roaring lion. (2.) He approved himself very bold and brave in the defence of his flock. This was that which he was now concerned to give proof of, and better evidence could not be demanded than this; thy servant not only rescued the lambs, but to revenge the injury, *slew both the lion and the bear.*

2. He applies his story like a man of faith. He owns, *ver. 27.* it was the Lord that delivered him from the lion and the bear, to him he gives the praise of that great achievement, and from thence he infers, *he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.* The lion and the bear were only enemies to me and my sheep, and it was in defence of my own interest that I attacked them, but this Philistine is an enemy to God and Israel, *defies the armies of the living God,* and it is for their honour that I attack him. Note, 1. Our experiences ought to be improved by us, as our encouragement to trust in God, and venture in the way of duty. He that has delivered us from our enemies, and the protection they are under, we may be encouraged to depend upon that special providence which is condescendant about the Israel of God. He that set bounds to the waves of the sea, and the rage of wild beasts, can and will restrain the wrath of wicked men. St. Paul seems to allude to this of David, *2 Tim. iv. 17, 18. I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion,* and therefore *I trust the Lord shall deliver me.* And perhaps David here thought of the story of Samson, and encouraged himself with it, for his slaying of a lion was a happy preface of his many illustrious victories over the Philistines in single combat.

Thus David took off Saul's objection against his undertaking, and gained a commission to fight the Philistine, with which Saul gave him a hearty good wish; since he would not venture himself he prayed for him that he would, *Go, and the Lord be with thee.* A good word if it were not spoken customarily and in a formality, as too often it is.

2. But David has somewhat to do likewise to get clear of the armour wherewith Saul would, by all means, have him dressed up, when he went upon this great action, *ver. 38. He armed David with his armour,* not that which he wore himself, the disproportion of his stature would not admit that, but some that he kept in his armoury; little thinking that he on whom he now put his helmet and coat of mail, must shortly inherit his crown and robe. David being not yet resolved which way to attack his enemy, *girded on his sword,* not knowing as yet, but he should have occasion to make use of it; but he found the armour would but incumber him, and would be rather his burden than his defence, and therefore he desires leave of Saul to put them off again; *I cannot go with these, for I have not proved them,* i. e. I have never been accustomed to such accoutrements as these. We may suppose Saul's armour to be very fine and very firm, but what good would it do David if it were not fit, or if he knew not how to manage himself in it. Those that aim at things above their education and usage, and covet the attire and armour of princes, forget that that is the best for us which we are fit for and accustomed to; if we had our desire we should wish to be in our own coat again, and say, we cannot go with these, and therefore better go without them.

40. And he took his staff in his hand, and chose him five smooth stones out of the brook, and put them in his shepherd's bag which he had, even in a scrip, and his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine. 41. And the Philistine came on and drew near unto David, and the man that bare the shield went before him. 42. And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he despised him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance. 43. And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? and the Philistine cursed David by his gods. 44. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beast of the field. 45. Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. 46. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand, and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee, and I will give the carcases of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth: that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. 47. And all this assembly shall know that the LORD saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hands.

We are now coming near this famous combat, and have in these verses the preparations and remonstrances made on both sides.

1. The preparation made on both sides for the encounter. The Philistine was already fixed, as he had been daily for forty days last past; well might he go with his armour, for he had sufficiently proved it. Only we are told, *ver. 41.* that he came on and drew near, a signal, it is likely, being given that his challenge was accepted, and as if he distrusted his helmet and coat of mail, a man went before him carrying his shield, for his own hands are full with his sword and spear, *ver. 45.* But what arms and ammunition is David furnished with? Truly none but what he brought with him as a shepherd; no breast-plate, or corselet, but his plain shepherd's coat, no spear, but his staff; no sword or bow, but his sling; no quiver, but his scrip; nor any arrows, but instead of them, five smooth stones picked up out of the brook, *ver. 40.* By this it appeared that his confidence was

purely in the power of God, and not in any sufficiency of his own; and that now at length, he that put it into his heart to fight the Philistine, put it into his head with what weapons to do it.

2. The remonstrances on both sides. In which observe,

1. How very proud Goliath was. (1.) With what scorn he looked upon his adversary, *ver. 42.* He looked about expecting to meet some tall strong man, but when he saw what a mean figure he made with whom he was to engage, he disdain'd him, thought it below him to enter the lists with him, and fearing that the contemptibleness of the champion he contended with would lessen the glory of his victory. He took notice of his person, that he was but a youth, not come to his strength, *ruddy and of a fair countenance*, fitter to accompany the virgins of Israel in their dances, (if mixed dancing was then in use) than to lead on the men of Israel in their battles. He took notice of his array with great indignation, *ver. 43.* *Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?* Dost thou think to beat me as easily as thou dost thy shepherd's dog? (2.) With what confidence he presumed upon his success. He cursed David by his gods, imprecating the impotent vengeance of his idols against him, thinking these fire balls thrown about him would secure his success: and therefore, in confidence of that, he darts his menaces, as if threatening words would kill, *ver. 44.* *Come to me, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air*, it will be a tender and delicate feast for them. Thus the security and presumption of fools destroys them.

2. How very pious David was. His speech favours nothing of ostentation, but God is all in all in it, *ver. 45, 46, 47.*

1. He derives his authority from God, *I come to thee*, by warrant and commission from heaven, *in the name of the Lord*, who has called me to and animated me for this undertaking; and who, by his universal providence is the *Lord of hosts*, of all hosts; and therefore his power to do what he pleaseth: and by the special grace of his covenant, is the *God of the armies of Israel*, and therefore has engaged, and will employ his power for their protection; and against thee who hast impiously defied them. *The name of God* David relied on, as Goliath did on his sword and spear. See *Psal. xx. 7. cxviii. 10, 11.*

2. He depends for success upon God, *ver. 46.* David speaks with as much assurance as Goliath had done, but upon better ground; it is his faith that faith, *This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand*; and not only thy carcass, but the carcasses of the host of the Philistines shall be given to the birds and beasts of prey.

3. He devotes the praise and glory of all to God. He did not, like Goliath, seek his own honour, but the honour of God; not doubting but by the success of this action, (1.) All the world shall be made to know that *there is a God*, and that the *God of Israel* is the only living and true God, and all other pretended deities are vanity and a lie. (2.) All Israel, (whom he calls not *this army*, but *this assembly*, or Church, because they were now religiously attending the goings of their God and king, as they used to do it in their *synagogue*) they shall know that the *Lord fighteth not with the sword or spear*, *ver. 47.* but can, when he pleases, save without either and against both, *Psal. xlv. 9.* David addressed himself to this combat rather as a priest that was going to offer sacrifice to the justice of God, than as a soldier that was going to engage an enemy of his country.

48. And it came to pass when the Philistine arose, and came and drew nigh to meet David, that David hasted, and ran towards the army to meet the Philistine. 49. And David put his hand in his bag, and took thence a stone, and slang it, and smote the Philistine in his forehead, that the stone sunk into his forehead; and he fell upon his face to the earth. 50. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and smote the Philistine and slew him; but there was no sword in the hand of David. 51. Therefore David ran and stood upon the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith. And when the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they fled. 52. And the men of Israel and of Judah arose, and shouted and pursued the Philistines, until thou come to the valley, and to the gates of Ekron: and the wounded of the Philistines fell down by the way to Shaaraim; even unto Gath, and unto Ekron. 53. And the children of Israel returned from chasing after the Philistines, and they spoiled their tents. 54. And David took the head of the Philistine, and brought it to Jerusalem: but he put his armour in his tent. 55. ¶ And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner the captain of the host, Abner, whose son is this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell. 56. And the king said, Enquire thou whose son the stripling is. 57. And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. 58. And Saul said to him, Whose son art thou, thou young man? And David answered, I am the son of thy servant Jesse the Beth-lehemite.

Here is, 1. The engagement between the two champions, *ver. 48.* To this engagement, 1. The Philistine advanced with a great deal of state and gravity: if he must encounter a pigmy, yet it shall be with the magnificence of a giant and grandee. This is intimated in the manner of expression. *He arose and came and drew nigh*, like a stalking mountain, over laid with brass and iron, to meet David. 2. David advanced with no less activity and cheerfulness; as one that aimed more to do execution, than to make a figure, he *hasted and ran*, being light clad, to meet the Philistine. We may imagine with what tenderness and compassion the Israelites saw such a pretty youth as this throwing himself into the mouth of destruction; but he knew whom he had believed, and for whom he acted.

2. The fall of Goliath in this engagement. He was in no haste, because in no fear, but confident that he should soon at one stroke cleave his adversary's head: but while he was preparing to do it solemnly, David did his business effectually, without any parade; he slang a stone which hit him in the forehead, and in the twinkling of an eye fetched him to the ground,

ver. 49. He knew there were famous slingers in Israel, *Judg. xx. 10.* yet was either so forgetful or presumptuous as to go with the beaver of his helmet open, and thither to the only part left exposed, not so much David's art, as God's providence, directed the stone, and brought it with such force that it sunk into his head, notwithstanding the impudence with which his forehead was brazened. See how frail and uncertain life is, even then when it thinks itself best fortified, and how quickly, how easily, and with how small a matter, the passage may be opened for life to go out and death to enter. Goliath himself has not power over the spirit to retain the spirit, *Eccl. viii. 8.* Let not the strong man glory in his strength, nor the armed man in his armour. See how God relists the proud, and pours contempt upon those that bid defiance to him and his people. None ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. One of the Rabbins thinks, that when Goliath said to David, *Come, and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air*, he drew up his head so hastily, that his helmet fell off, and so left his broad forehead a fair mark for David. To complete the execution, he drew Goliath's own sword, a two-handed weapon for David, and with it cut off his head, *ver. 51.* What needed David take a sword of his own? his enemy's sword shall serve his purpose, when he has occasion for one. God is greatly glorified, when his proud enemies are cut off with their own sword, and he makes their own tongues to fall upon them, *Psal. lxxiv. 8.* David's victory over Goliath was typical of the triumphs of the Son of David over Satan and all the powers of darkness, whom he spoiled, and made a show of them openly, *Col. ii. 15.* and we through him are more than conquerors.

3. The defeat of the Philistines army hereupon. They relied wholly upon the strength of their champion, and therefore, when they saw him slain they did not, as Goliath had offered, throw down their arms, and surrender themselves servants to Israel, *ver. 9.* but took to their heels, being wholly dispirited, and thinking it to no purpose to oppose one before whom such a mighty man was fallen: they fled, *ver. 51.* and this put life into the Israelites; they shouted and pursued them, *ver. 52.* David, it is probable, leading them on in the pursuit, even to the gates of their own cities. In their return from the chase they seized all their bag and baggage, plundered their tents, *ver. 53.* and enriched themselves with the spoil.

4. David's disposal of his trophies, *ver. 54.* He brought the head of the Philistine to Jerusalem, to be a terror to the Jebusites, who hold the strong hold of Zion: it is probable he carried it in triumph to other cities; his armour he laid up in his tent: only the sword was preserved behind the ephod in the tabernacle, as consecrated to God, and a memorial of the victory to his honour, *chap. xxi. 9.*

5. The notice that was taken of David. Though he had been at court formerly, yet having been for some time absent, *ver. 15.* Saul had forgotten him, being melancholy and mindless, and little thinking that his musician should have spirit enough to be his champion; and therefore, as if he had never seen him before, he asked whose son he was. Abner was a stranger to him, but brought him to Saul himself, *ver. 57.* and he gave a modest account of himself, *ver. 58.* And now he was introduced to the court, on much greater advantages than before; in which he owned God's hand performing all things for him.

C H A P. XVIII.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we left David in triumph; now in this chapter we have, 1. The improvement of his triumphs; he soon became, (1.) Saul's constant attendant, *ver. 2.* (2.) Jonathan's covenant friend, *ver. 1, 3, 4.* (3.) The darling of his country, *ver. 5-7, 16.* 2. The allays of his triumphs. This is the vanity that accompanies even a right work, that for it a man is envied, *Eccl. iv. 4.* So David was by Saul. (1.) He hated him, and sought to kill him himself, *ver. 8-11.* (2.) He feared him, and contrived how he might have some mischief done him, *ver. 12-17.* Proposed to marry his daughter to him; but, 1. Balked him of the eldest to provoke him, *ver. 19.* and, 2. Gave him the younger upon conditions which would endanger his life, *ver. 20-25.* But David performed his conditions bravely, *ver. 26, 27.* and grew to be more and more esteemed, *ver. 28-30.* Still David is rising, but (as all that aim at the crown of life must expect) he had a great deal of difficulty and opposition to grapple with.

1. AND it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. 2. And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. 3. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. 4. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle. 5. ¶ And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, and behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

David was anointed to the crown, to take it out of Saul's hand, and over Jonathan's head, and yet here we find,

1. That Saul, who was now in possession of the crown, reposed a confidence in him, God so ordering it, that he might by his preferment at court be prepared for future service. Saul now took him home with him, and would not suffer him to return again to his retirement, *ver. 2.* And David having signalized himself above the men of war, in taking up the challenge which they declined, *Saul set him over the men of war*, *ver. 5.* not that he made him general, Abner was in that post, but perhaps captain of the life-guard; or though he was youngest he ordered him to have the precedency, in recompence of his great services. He employed him in the affairs of government, and David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, shewing himself as obsequious as he was bold and courageous. Those that hope to rule, must first learn to obey. He had approved himself a dutiful son to Jesse his father, and now a dutiful servant to Saul his master; those that are good in one relation, it is hoped will be so in another.

2. That Jonathan who was heir to the crown, entered into covenant with him; God so ordering it, that David's way might be the clearer, when his rival was his friend.

(1.) Jonathan

(1.) Jonathan conceived an extraordinary kindness and affection for him, *ver. 1.* When he had made an end of speaking to Saul, he perfectly fell in love with him. Whether it refers to his conference with Saul before the battle, *chap. xvii. 31—37.* or to that after, *ver. 56.* in which it is probable much more was said than is there set down, is uncertain. But in both David expressed himself with so much prudence, modesty and piety, such a felicity of expression, with so much boldness and yet so much sweetness, and all this so natural and unaffected, and the more surprising because of the disadvantages of his education and appearance, *that the soul of Jonathan was immediately knit unto the soul of David.* Jonathan had formerly set upon a Philistine army with the same faith and bravery that David had now attacked a Philistine giant; so that there was between them a very near resemblance of affections, dispositions and counsels, which made their spirits unite so easily, so quickly, so closely, that they seemed but as one soul in two bodies. None had so much reason to disaffect David as Jonathan had, because he was to put him by the crown, yet none affects him more. Those that are governed in their love by principles of wisdom and grace, will not suffer their affections to be alienated by any secular regards or consultations; the greater thoughts will swallow up and over-rule the lesser.

(2.) He testified his love to David by a generous present he made him, *ver. 4.* He was concerned to see so great a soul, though lodged in so fair a body, yet disguised in the mean and despicable dregs of a poor shepherd, and therefore takes care to put him presently in the habit of a courtier, for he gave him a robe, and of a foldier, for he gave him, instead of his staff and sling, a sword and bow, and instead of his shepherd's scrip, a girdle, either a belt or a sash; and which made the present much more obliging, they were the same that he himself had worn, and (as a preface of what would follow) he stripped himself of them to dress David in them. Saul's would not fit him, but Jonathan's did; their bodies were of a size, an indication of the suitableness of their minds. When Saul put these marks of honour on David, he put them off again, because he would first earn them, and then wear them; but now he had given proofs of the spirit of a prince and foldier, he was not ashamed to wear the habits of a prince and a foldier. David is seen in Jonathan's clothes, that all may take notice he is Jonathan's second self. Our Lord Jesus has thus shewed his love to us, that he stripped himself to clothe us, emptied himself to enrich us, nay he did more than Jonathan, he clothed himself with our rags, whereas Jonathan did not put on David's.

(3.) He endeavoured the perpetuating of this friendship: so entirely satisfied were they in each other, even at the first interview, that they made a covenant with each other, *ver. 3.* Their mutual affection was sincere; and he that bears an honest mind starts not at assurances. True love desires to be constant. Those who love Christ as their own souls, will be willing to join themselves to him in an everlasting covenant.

3. That both court and country agree to bless him: it is but seldom that they agree in their favourites; yet David was accepted in the sight of the people, and also (which was strange) in the sight of Saul's servants, *ver. 5.* The former cordially loved him, the latter could not for shame but care and compliment him. And it was certainly a great instance of the power of God's grace in David, that he was able to bear all this respect and honour flowing upon him of a sudden, without being lifted up above measure. Those that climb so fast have need of good heads and good hearts: it is harder to know how to abound, than how to be abased.

6. And it came to pass as they came when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. 7. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. 8. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him; and he said, They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands: and what can he have more but the kingdom? 9. And Saul eyed David from that day and forward. 10. ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, that the evil spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied in the midst of the house; and David played with his hand, as at other times; and there was a javelin in Saul's hand. 11. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it: and David avoided out of his presence twice.

Now begin David's troubles, and they not only tread on the heels of his triumphs; but take rise from them: such is the vanity of that in this world which seems greatest.

1. He was too much magnified by the common people. Some time after the victory, Saul went a triumphant progress through the cities of Israel that lay next him, to receive the congratulations of the country. And when he made his public entry into any place, the women were most forward to shew him respect, as was usual then in public triumphs, *ver. 6.* and they had got a song, it seems, which they sang in their dances (made by some poet or other, that was a great admirer of David's bravery, and was more just than wife, in giving his achievements in the late action the preference before Saul's) the burden of which was, *Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.* Such a difference as this Moses made between the numbers of Ephraim and Manasseh, *Deut. xxxiii. 17.*

2. This mightily displeased Saul, and made him envy David, *ver. 8, 9.* he ought to have considered that they referred only to this late action, and intended not to diminish any of Saul's former exploits: and that in the action now celebrated, it was undeniably true, that David, in killing Goliath, did, in effect, slay all the Philistines that were slain that day, and defeated the whole army; so that they did but give David his due: it may be, he that composed the song, only used a poetical liberty, and intended not any invidious comparison between Saul and David; or, if he did, it was below the great mind of a prince to take notice of such a reflection upon his personal honour, when it appeared that the glory of the public was sincerely intended. But Saul was very wroth, and presently suspected some treasonable design at the bottom of it: *What can he have more than the kingdom?* This made him eye David as one he was jealous of and sought advantages against, *ver. 9.* his countenance was not towards him as it had been. Proud men cannot enquire to hear any praised but themselves, and think all the honour lost that goes by themselves. It is a sign the Spirit of God is departed from men, if they be peevish in their resentment of affronts, envi-

ous and suspicious of all about them, and ill-natured in their carriage; for the wisdom from above makes us quite otherwise.

3. In his fury he aimed to kill David, *ver. 10, 11.* Jealousy is the rage of a man; it made Saul outrageous against David, and impatient to get him out of the way.

1. His fits of phrenzy returned upon him. The very next day, after he conceived malice against David, the evil spirit from God, that had formerly haunted him, seized him again. Those that indulge themselves in envy and uncharitableness, give place to the devil, and prepare for the re-entry of the unclean spirit, with seven other more wicked. Where envy is, there is confusion. Saul pretended a religious ecstasy, he prophesied in the midst of the house, i. e. he had the gestures and motions of a prophet, and humoured the thing well enough to decoy David into a snare, and that he might be tearless of any danger, and off his guard; and, perhaps, designing, if he could but kill him, to impute it to a divine impulse, and to charge it upon the spirit of prophecy, with which he seemed to be animated: but really it was a hellish fury that actuated him.

2. David, though advanced to a much higher post of honour, distained not, for his master's service, to return to his harp. He played with his hand as at other times. Let not the highest think any thing below them, whereby they may do good and be serviceable to those they are obliged to.

3. He took this opportunity to endeavour the death of David. A sword in a madman's hand is a dangerous thing, especially such a madman as Saul was, that was mad with malice. Yet he had a javelin or dart in his hand, with which he projected and endeavoured to slay David; not in a sudden passion, but deliberately: *I will smite David to the wall with it,* with such a desperate force did he throw it. Justly doth David complain of his enemies, that they hated him with a cruel hatred, *Psal. xxv. 19.* No life is thought too precious to be sacrificed to malice. If a grateful sense of the great service David had done to the public could not assuage Saul's fury, yet one would think he should have allowed himself to consider the kindness he was now doing to himself, relieving him, so as no one else could, against the worst of troubles. Those are possessed with a devilish spirit indeed, that render evil for good. Compare David, with a harp in his hand, aiming to serve Saul, and Saul, with his javelin in his hand, aiming to slay David; and observe the sweetness and usefulness of God's persecuted people, and the brutishness and barbarity of their persecutors. *The blood thirstily hute the upright, but the just seek his soul,* *Prov. xxix. 10.*

4. David happily avoided the blow twice, viz. now, and afterwards, *chap. xix. 10.* he did not throw the javelin at Saul again, withdrew, not fighting, but flying, for his own preservation; though he had both strength and courage enough, and colour of right, to make resistance and revenge the injury, yet he did no more but secure himself by getting out of the way of it. David, no doubt, had a watchful eye upon Saul's hand, and the javelin in it, and did as bravely in running from it, as he did lately in running upon Goliath. Yet his safety must be ascribed to the watchful eye of God's providence upon him, saving his servant from the hurtful sword; and by this narrow escape it seemed he was designed for something extraordinary.

12. ¶ And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul. 13. Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. 14. And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways, and the LORD was with him. 15. Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him. 16. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them. 17. ¶ And Saul said to David, Behold, my eldest daughter Merab, her will I give thee to wife: only be thou valiant for me, and fight the LORD's battles: for Saul said, Let not mine hand be upon him, but let the hand of the Philistines be upon him. 18. And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son-in-law to the king? 19. But it came to pass at the time when Merab Saul's daughter should have been given to David, that she was given unto Adriel the Meholathite to wife. 20. And Michal Saul's daughter loved David: and they told Saul, and the thing pleased him. 21. And Saul said, I will give him her, that she may be a snare to him, and that the hand of the Philistines may be against him. Wherefore Saul said to David, Thou shalt this day be my son-in-law in the one of the twain. 22. ¶ And Saul commanded his servants, saying, Commune with David secretly, and say, Behold, the king hath delight in thee, and all his servants love thee: now therefore be the king's son-in-law. 23. And Saul's servants spake those words in the ears of David: and David said, Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man, and lightly esteemed? 24. And the servants of Saul told him, saying, On this manner spake David. 25. And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. 26. And when his servant told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law: and the days were not expired. 27. Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son-in-law: and Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife. 28. And Saul saw and knew that the LORD was with David, and that Michal Saul's daughter loved him. 29. And Saul was yet

yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually. 30. Then the princes of the Philistines went forth, and it came to pass after they went forth that David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name was much set by.

Saul had now in effect proclaimed war with David; he began in open hostility, when he threw the javelin at him; now we are here told, how his enmity proceeded, and how David received the attacks of it.

1. See how Saul expressed his malice against David.

1. He was afraid of him, ver. 12. Perhaps he pretended to be afraid that David would do him mischief, to force his way to the crown. Those that design ill to others, are commonly willing to have it thought that ill is designed against them: but David's withdrawing, ver. 11. was a plain evidence that he was far from such a thought. However, he really stood in awe of him, as Herod feared John, *Mark* vi. 20. Saul was sensible that he had lost the favourable presence of God himself, and that David had it, and for this reason he feared him. Note, Those are truly great and to be revered, that have God with them. The more wisely David behaved himself, the more Saul feared him, ver. 20. and again, ver. 29. Men think the way to be feared, is to huff and threaten, which makes them feared by fools only, but despised by the wise and good; whereas the way to be both feared and loved, feared by those to whom we would wish to be a terror, and loved by those to whom we would wish to be a delight, is to behave ourselves wisely. Wisdom makes the face to shine, and commands respect.

2. He removed him from court, and gave him a regiment in the country, ver. 13. He made him a captain over a thousand, that he might be from under his eye, because he hated the sight of him; and that he might not make an interest with the courtiers. Yet herein he did impolitically; for it gave David an opportunity of ingratiating himself with the people, who therefore loved him, ver. 16. because he went out and came in before them, i. e. he presided in the business of his country, civil as well as military, and gave universal satisfaction.

3. He stirred him up to take all occasions of quarrelling with the Philistines and engaging them, ver. 17. insinuating to him that hereby he would do good service to his prince; be thou valiant for me, and good service to his God: fight the Lord's battles; and a kindness to himself too, for hereby he would qualify himself for the honour he designed him, which was to marry his eldest daughter to him. This he had merited by killing Goliath, for it was promised by proclamation to him that should do that exploit, chap. xvii. 25. but David was so modest, as not to demand it, and now, when Saul proposed it, it was with a design of mischief to him, to make him venture upon hazardous attempts, saying in his heart, Let the hand of the Philistines be upon him, hoping they would some time or other be the death of him; which yet how could he expect, when he saw that God was with him.

4. He did what he could to provoke him to discontent and mutiny, by breaking his promise with him, and giving his daughter to another, when the time was come that she should have been given to him, ver. 19. This was as great an affront as he could possibly put upon him, and touched him both in his honour and in his love: he therefore thought David's resentments of it would break out in some indecency or other, in word or deed, which might give him an advantage against him to take him off by course of law. Thus evil men seek mischief.

5. When he was disappointed in this, he proffered him his other daughter, (who it seems had a secret kindness for David, ver. 20.) but with this design, that she may be a snare to him, ver. 21. (1.) Perhaps he hoped that she would, even after the marriage to David, take part with her father against her husband, and give him an opportunity of doing him a kindness. However, (2.) The conditions of the marriage he hoped would be his destruction; for (so zealous will Saul seem against the Philistines) the conditions of the marriage must be that he kill a hundred Philistines, and as proofs that those he had slain were uncircumcised, he must bring in their foreskins cut off; this would be a just reproach upon the Philistines, who hated circumcision as it was an ordinance of God; and perhaps, David doing this would the more exasperate them against him, and make them seek to be revenged on him, which was the thing that Saul desired and designed, much more than to be avenged on the Philistines: For Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines, ver. 25. See here, (1.) What cheats bad men put upon themselves. Saul's conscience would not suffer him, except when the evil spirit was actually upon him, to aim at David's life himself, for even he could not but conceive an horror at the thought of murdering such an innocent and excellent person; but he thought designedly to expose him to the Philistines had nothing ill in it: Let not my hand be upon him but the hand of the Philistines; whereas that malicious design against him was as truly murder before God, as if he had slain him with his own hands. (2.) What cheats they put upon the world. Saul pretended a mighty kindness for David, even then when he aimed at his ruin, and was actually plotting it: Thou shalt be my son in law, faith he, ver. 21. notwithstanding he hated him implacably. Perhaps David refers to this when, *Psalms* lv. 21. he speaks of his enemy, as one whose words were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart. It is probable, Saul's employing his servants to persuade David to enter into a treaty of a match with his daughter Michal, ver. 22. arose from an apprehension that either his having cheated him about his elder daughter, ver. 19. or the hardness of the terms he intended now to propose would make him decline it.

2. See how David carried himself, when the tide of Saul's displeasure runs thus high against him.

1. He behaved himself wisely in all his ways, ver. 14. He perceived Saul's jealousy of him, which made him very cautious and circumspect in every thing he said and did, and careful to give no offence: Did not complain of hard measures nor make himself the head of a party, but managed all the affairs he was entrusted with, as one that made it his business to do real service to his king and country, looking upon that to be the end of his preferment. And then the Lord was with him to give him success in all his undertakings. Though he contracted Saul's ill-will by it, yet he obtained God's favour. Compare this with *Psalms* cii. 2. where it is David's promise, I will behave myself wisely; and that promise he here performed; and it is his prayer, O when wilt thou come unto me! And that prayer God here answered, the Lord was with him. However blind fortune may seem to favour fools, God will own and bless those that behave themselves wisely.

2. When it was proposed to him to be son-in-law to the king, he once and again received the proposal with all possible modesty and humility. When Saul proposed his elder daughter to him, ver. 18. he said, Who am I, and what is my life? When the courtiers proposed the younger, he took

no notice of the affront Saul had given in disposing of the elder from him, but continued in the same mind, ver. 23. Seemeth it a light thing to you to be a king's son-in-law, seeing that I am a poor man and lightly esteemed? He knew Michal loved him, and yet did not offer to improve his interest in her affections, for the gaining of her without her father's consent, but waited till it was proposed to him. And then see, (1.) How highly he speaks of the honour offered him. To be son-in-law to the king. Though this king was but an upstart, in his original as mean as himself, in his management no better than he should be, yet being a crowned head he speaks of him and the royal family with all due respect. Note, Religion is so far from teaching us, that it doth not allow us to be rude and unmannerly. We must render honour to whom honour is due. (2.) How humbly he speaks of himself. Who am I! This did not proceed from a mean, abject, sneaking spirit, when occasion was he made it to appear that he had as much a sense of honour as most men: nor was it from a jealousy of Saul, though he had reason enough to fear a snake under the green grass, but from his true and deep humility. Who am I! a poor man and lightly esteemed! David had as much reason as any man to value himself: He was of an ancient and honourable family of Judah, a comely person, a great statesman and soldier: his achievements great, for he had won Goliath's head and Michal's heart: he knew himself destined by the divine counsels to the throne of Israel, and yet Who am I! and what is my life? Note, it well becomes us, however God has advanced us, always to have low thoughts of ourselves: He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. And if David thus magnified the honour of being son-in-law to the king, how highly then should we think of it to be sons (not in law, but in gospel) to the King of kings: Behold what manner of love the father has bestowed upon us! Who are we that we should be thus dignified.

3. When the slaying of an hundred Philistines was made the condition of David's marrying Saul's daughter, he readily closed with it, ver. 26. It pleased David well to be the king's son-in-law upon those terms; and before the time given him for the action was expired he doubled the demand and slew two hundred, ver. 27. he would not seem to suspect that Saul designed his hurt by it (though he had reason enough) but his honour rather, and therefore cheerfully undertook it, as became a brave soldier and a true lover, though we may suppose it uneasy to Michal. David hereby discovered likewise, (1.) A great confidence in the divine protection; he knew God was with him, and therefore, whatever Saul hoped, David did not fear falling by the Philistines, though he must needs expose himself much by such an undertaking as this. (2.) A great zeal for the good of his country, which he would not decline any occasion of doing service to, though with the hazard of his life. (3.) A right notion of honour, which consists not so much in being preferred, as in deserving to be so. David was then pleased with the thoughts of being the king's son-in-law, when he found the honour set at this high price; being more solicitous how to merit it, than how to obtain it; nor could he wear it with satisfaction till he had won it.

4. Even after he was married he continued his good services to Israel. When the princes of the Philistines began to move towards another war, David was ready to oppose them, and behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul, ver. 30. The law dispensed with men going to war the first year after they were married, *Deut.* xxiv. 5. but David loved his country too well to make use of that dispensation. Many that have shewed themselves forward to serve the public, when they have been in pursuit of preferment, have declined it when they have gained their point; but David acted from more generous principles.

Lastly, Observe how God brought good to David out of Saul's projects against him. (1.) Saul gave him his daughter to be a snare to him, but in this respect that marriage was a kindness to him, that his being Saul's son-in-law made him succeeding him much the less invidious, especially when so many of his sons were slain with him, chap. xxxi. 2. (2.) Saul thought, by putting him upon dangerous services, to have him taken off, but that very thing confirmed his interest in the people; for the more he did against the Philistines, the better they loved him, so that his name was much set by, ver. 30. which would make his coming to the crown the more easy. Thus God makes even the wrath of man to praise him, and serves his designs of kindness to his own people by it.

C H A P. XIX.

Immediately after David's marriage, which one would have hoped might have intitled him to Saul's good affection, we find his troubles coming upon him faster than ever, and Saul's enmity to him the cause of all. His death was vowed, and four fair escapes of him from the hurtful sword of Saul, we have an account of in this chapter. The first by the prudent mediation of Jonathan, ver. 1—7. The second by his own quickness, ver. 8—10. The third by Michal's fidelity, ver. 11—17. The fourth by Samuel's protection, and a change for the present wrought upon Saul, ver. 18—24. Thus God has many ways of preserving his people. Providence is never at a loss.

1. **A**ND Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David. 2. But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself: 3. And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee. 4. ¶ And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David: because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good. 5. For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause? 6. And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain. 7. ¶ And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those

those things; and Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

Saul and Jonathan appear here in their different characters, with reference to David.

1. Never was enemy so unreasonably cruel as Saul: He spake to his own son and all his servants *that they should kill David*, ver. 1. His projects to take him off had failed, and therefore he proclaims him an out-law, and charges all about him, upon their allegiance, to take the first opportunity to kill David. It is strange he was not ashamed thus to avow his malice, when he could give no reason for it; and yet knowing that all his servants loved him (for so he said himself, *chap. xviii. 22.*) he was not afraid of provoking them to rebel by this bloody order. Either malice was not then so politic, or justice was not so corrupted as it has been since, or else Saul would have had him indicted, and have suborned witnesses to swear treason against him, and so have had him taken off, as Naboth was; by colour of law: but there is least danger from this undilguised malice. It was strange he who knew how well Jonathan loved him, should expect him to kill him; but he thought because he was heir to the crown, he must needs be as envious at David as himself was. And providence ordered it thus, that he might befriend David's safety.

Never was a friend so surprisingly kind as Jonathan. *A friend at need, is a friend indeed*: such a one Jonathan was to David. He not only continued to delight much in him, though David's glory eclipsed his, but bravely appeared for him now the stream run so strong against him.

1. He took care for his present security, by letting him know his danger, *ver. 2. take heed to thyself*; and keep out of harm's way. Jonathan knew not but some of the servants might be so obsequious to Saul, or so envious at David, as to put the orders in execution which Saul had given, if they could light on David.

2. He took pains to pacify his father and reconcile him to David. The next morning he ventured to commune with him concerning David, *ver. 3.* not that night, either because he observed Saul to be drunk, and not fit to be spoken to, or because he hoped when he had slept upon it, he would himself revoke the order, or because he could not have opportunity of speaking to him till morning. His intercession for David was, (1.) Very prudent. It was managed with a great deal of the meekness of wisdom; and he shewed himself faithful to his friend by speaking good of him, though he was in danger of incurring his father's displeasure by it. A rare instance of valuable friendship! He pleads, 1. The good services David had done to the public, and particularly to Saul; *His work has been to thee-ward very good*, ver. 4. Witness the relief he had given him against his distemper with his harp; and his bold encounter with Goliath, that memorable action, which did, in effect, save Saul's life and kingdom; he appeals to himself concerning that, *thou thyself sawest it, and didst rejoice*. In that and other instances it appeared that David was a favourite of heaven and a friend to Israel, as well as a good servant to Saul, for by him, *the Lord wrought a great salvation for all Israel*; so that to order him to be slain, was not only base ingratitude to so good a servant, but a great affront to God, and a great injury to the public. 2. He pleads his innocency, though he had formerly done many good offices, yet if he had now been chargeable with any ill crimes it had been another matter, but *he has not sinned against thee*, ver. 4. *his blood is innocent*, ver. 5. and if he be slain it is without cause. And Jonathan had therefore reason to protest against it, because he could not entail any thing upon his family more pernicious than the guilt of innocent blood. (2.) His intercession being thus prudent was prevalent. God inclined the heart of Saul to hearken unto the voice of Jonathan. Note, We must be willing to hear reason, and to take all reproof and good advice even from our inferiors; parents from their own children. How forcible are right words? Saul was at the present so far convinced of the unreasonableness of his enmity to David, that (1.) He recalleth the bloody warrant for his execution, *ver. 6. As the Lord liveth he shall not be slain*. Whether Saul swore here with due solemnity or no doth not appear; perhaps he did, and the matter was of that moment as to deserve it, and of that uncertainty as to need it; but at other times Saul swore rashly and profanely, which made the validity of this oath justly questionable: for those that can so far jest with an oath as to make a by-word of it, and prostitute it to a trifle, it may be feared have not such a due sense of the obligation of it, but that to serve a turn they will prostitute it to a lie. Some suspect that Saul said and swore this with a malicious design to bring David within his reach again, and that at the same time he intended to take the first opportunity to slay him: but as bad as Saul was, we can scarce think to ill of him; and therefore suppose that he spake as he thought for the present, but the convictions soon wore off, and his corruptions prevailed and triumphed over them. (2.) He renewed the grant of his place at court: Jonathan brought him to Saul, and *he was in his presence as in times past*, ver. 7. hoping that now the storm was over, and that his friend Jonathan would be instrumental to keep his father always in this good mind.

8. And there was war again: and David went out and fought with the Philistines, and slew them with a great slaughter; and they fled from him. 9. And the evil spirit from the LORD was upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his javelin in his hand: and David played with his hand. 10. And Saul sought to smite David even to the wall with the javelin; but he slipped away out of Saul's presence; and he smote the javelin into the wall; and David fled, and escaped that night.

Here, 1. David continues his good services to his king and country. Though Saul had requited him evil for good, and even his usefulness was the very thing for which Saul envied him, yet he did not therefore retire in sullenness and decline public service. Those that are ill paid for doing good, yet must not be *wary in well doing*, remembering what a bountiful benefactor our heavenly Father is, even to the froward and unthankful.

Notwithstanding the many affronts Saul had given to David, yet we find him, (1.) As bold as ever in using his sword for the service of his country, *ver. 8.* The war broke out again with the Philistines, which gave David occasion again to signalize himself, it was with a great deal of bravery that he charged them and came off victorious, slew many and put the rest to flight. (2.) As cheerful as ever in using his harp for the service of his prince. When Saul was disturbed with his former fits of melancholy, *David played with his hand*, ver. 9. He might have pleaded that that was a piece of service now below him; but an humble good man will think nothing below him by which he may do good. He might have objected the danger he was in the last time he did this office for Saul, *chap. xviii. 10.* But he had learned to render good for evil, and to trust God with his safety

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in the way of his duty. See how David was affraid when his enemy was sick, *Psal. xxxv. 13. 14.* which perhaps refers to Saul's sickness.

2. Saul continues his malice against David. He that but the other day had sworn by his Maker that he *should not be slain*, now endeavours to slay him himself. So implacable, so incurable is the enmity of the seed of the serpent against that of the woman; so deceitful and desperately wicked is the heart of man without the grace of God, *Jer. xvii. 9.* The fresh honours David had won in this last war with the Philistines, instead of extinguishing Saul's ill will to him and confirming his reconciliation, revived his envy and exasperated him yet more. And when he indulged this wicked passion, no marvel that *the evil spirit came upon him*, ver. 9. for when we let the *sun go down upon our wrath, we give place to the devil*, *Eph. iv. 26, 27.* we make room for him and invite him. Discomposures of mind, though helped forward by the agency of Satan, commonly owe their original to mens own sins and follies. Saul's fear and jealousy made him a torment to himself, so that he could not sit in his house without a javelin in his hand, pretending it for his preservation, but designed it for David's destruction; for he endeavoured to nail him to the wall, turning at him so violently that he stuck the javelin into the wall, ver. 10. So strong was the devil in him, so strong his own rage and passion. Perhaps he thought, if he had killed him now he had been excusable both before God and man, as being *non compos mentis*, and that it would have been imputed to his distraction. But God cannot be deceived by pretences, whatever men may be.

3. God continues his care of David, and still watcheth over him for good. Saul missed his blow; David was too quick for him and fled, and by a kind of providence escaped that night. To these preservations among others David often refers in his Psalms, when he speaks of God's being his shield and buckler, his rock and fortress, and delivering his soul from death.

11. Saul also sent messengers unto David's house to watch him, and to slay him in the morning: and Michal David's wife told him, saying, If thou save not thy life to night, to morrow thou shalt be slain. 12. ¶ So Michal let David down through a window: and he went and fled, and escaped. 13. And Michal took an image and laid it in the bed, and put a pillow of goats' hair for his bolster, and covered it with a cloth. 14. And when Saul sent messengers to take David, he said, He is sick. 15. And Saul sent the messengers again to see David, saying, Bring him up to me in the bed, that I may slay him. 16. And when the messengers were come in, behold there was an image in the bed, with a pillow of goat's hair for his bolster. 17. And Saul said unto Michal, Why hast thou deceived me so, and sent away mine enemy, that he has escaped? And Michal answered Saul, He said unto me, Let me go; why should I kill thee?

Here is, 1. Saul's further design of mischief to David. When he had escaped the javelin, supposing he went straight to his own house, as indeed he did, he sent some of his guards after him to lay wait for him at the door of his house and to assassinate him in the morning as soon as he stirred out, *ver. 11.* Josephus saith, the design was to seize him and to hurry him before a court of justice that was ordered to condemn him and put him to death as a traitor; but we are here told it was a shorter way they were to take with him, they were ordered to *slay him*. Well might David complain that his enemies were *bloody men*, as he did in the Psalm which he penned at this time, and upon this occasion, *Psal. lxx.* When Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him, *See ver. 2, 3.* and 7. he complains that *swords were in their lips*. 2. David's wonderful deliverance out of this danger; Michal was the instrument of it, whom Saul gave him to be a snare to him, but she proved his protector and helper; often is the devil out-shot in his own bow. How Michal came to know the danger her husband was in, doth not appear; perhaps she had notice sent her from court, or rather was herself aware of the soldiers about the house when they were going to bed, though they kept so still and silent that they said, *Who doth hear?* which David takes notice of in that Psalm, *ver. 7.* She knowing her father's great indignation at David, soon suspected the design, and bethought herself for her husband's safety.

1. She got David out of the danger. She told him how imminent the peril was, *ver. 11. To-morrow thou wilt be slain*. That (as Josephus paraphrases it) it was the sun saw him there next morning it would never see him more; and then put him in a way of escape. David himself was better versed in the art of fighting than of flying, and had it been lawful it would have been easy for him to have cleared his house, by dint of sword, from those that haunted it, but *Michal let him down through a window*, ver. 12. all the doors being guarded; and to be fled and escaped. And now it was that either in his own closet before he went, or in the hiding place to which he fled, he penned that fifty-ninth Psalm: which shews that in his flight and hurry his mind was composed, and in this great danger his faith was strong and fixed on God; and whereas the plot was to slay him in the morning, he speaks there with the greatest assurance, *ver. 16. I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning*.

She put a sham upon Saul and those whom he employed to be the instruments of his cruelty. When the doors of the house were opened in the morning, and David did not appear, the messengers would search the house for him, and did so. But Michal told them he was sick in bed, *ver. 14.* and if they would not believe her, they might see, for, *ver. 13.* she had put a wooden image in the bed, and wrapt it up close and warm as if it had been David asleep, not in a condition to be spoken to: the goats hair about the image was to resemble David's hair, the better to impose upon them. Michal can by no means be justified in telling a lie, and covering it thus with a cheat; God's truth needed not her lie; but she intended hereby to keep Saul in suspense for a while, that David might have time to secure himself, not doubting but those messengers would pursue him, if they found he was gone. The messengers had so much humanity as not to offer him any disturbance, when they heard he was sick; for to them that are in that misery pity should be shown; but Saul, when he heard it, gave positive orders that he should be brought to him sick or well, *ver. 15. Bring him to me in the bed, that I may slay him*. It was base and barbarous thus to triumph over a sick man; and to vow the death of one that for ought he knew was dying by the hand of nature. So earnestly did he thirst after his blood, and so greedy was his revenge, that he could not be pleased to see him dead unless he himself was the death of him: though a while ago he had said, *Let not mine*

mine hand be upon him. Thus when men lay the reins on the neck of their passions, they grow more and more outrageous. When the messengers were sent again, the cheat was discovered, ver. 16. But by this time it was to be hoped David was safe, and therefore Michal was not then much concerned at the discovery. Saul chid her for helping David away, ver. 17. *Why hast thou deceived me so?* What a base spirit was Saul of, to expect that because Michal was his daughter, she must therefore betray her own husband to him unjustly? Ought she not to forsake and forget her father and her father's house to cleave to her husband? Those that themselves will be held by no bonds of reason or religion are ready to think that others should as easily break those bonds. In answer to Saul's chiding, Michal is not so careful of her husband's reputation as she had been of his person, when she makes her excuse, *He said, Let me go, why should I kill thee?* As her insinuating that she would have hindered his flight was false, it was she that put him upon it and furthered it; so it was an unjust unworthy reflection upon him to suggest that he threatened to kill her if she would not let him go, and might confirm Saul in his rage against him. David was far from being so barbarous a man and so imperious a husband, so brutish in his resolves, and so haughty in his menaces, as she here represented him. But David suffered both from friends and foes, and so did the Son of David.

18. ¶ So David fled, and escaped, and came to Samuel to Ramah, and told him all that Saul had done to him: and he and Samuel went and dwelt in Naioth. 19. And it was told Saul, saying, Behold, David is at Naioth in Ramah. 20. And Saul sent messengers to take David; and when they saw the company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied. 21. And when it was told Saul, he sent other messengers, and they prophesied likewise: and Saul set messengers again the third time, and they prophesied also. 22. Then went he also to Ramah, and came to a great well that is in Sechu: and he asked and said, Where are Samuel and David? And one said, Behold they be at Naioth in Ramah. 23. And he went thither to Naioth in Ramah: and the Spirit of God was upon him also, and he went on and prophesied, until he came to Naioth in Ramah: 24. And he stripped off his clothes also, and prophesied before Samuel in like manner, and lay down naked all that day, and all that night. Wherefore they say, Is Saul also among the prophets?

Here is, 1. David's place of refuge. Being got away in the night from his own house, he fled not to Beth-lehem to his relations, or to any of the cities of Israel that had crested and cried him up, to make an interest in them for his own preservation: but he ran straight to Samuel and told him all that Saul had done to him, ver. 18. (1.) Because Samuel was the man that had given him assurance of the crown, and his faith in that assurance now beginning to fail, and he being ready to say in his haste, (or in his flight, as some read it, *Psal. cxvi. 11.*) *all men are liars*, (not only Saul that promised me my life, but Samuel himself that promised me the throne) whither should he go but to Samuel for such encouragements, in this day of distress, as would support his faith. In flying to Samuel he made God his refuge, trusting in the shadow of his wings; where else can a good man think himself safe? (2.) Because Samuel, as a prophet, was best able to advise him what to do in this day of his distress. In the Palm he penned the night before he had lit up his prayer to God, and now he takes the first opportunity of waiting upon Samuel, to receive direction and instruction from God. If we expect answers of peace to our prayers, we must have our ears open to God's word. (3.) Because with Samuel there was a college of prophets, with whom he might join in praising God: and the pleasure of that would be the greatest relief imaginable to him in his present distress. He met with little rest or satisfaction in Saul's court, and therefore went to seek it in Samuel's church. And, doubtless, what little pleasure is to be had in this world, they have it that live a life of communion with God; so that David retired in the time of trouble, *Psal. xxvii. 4, 5, 6.*

2. David's protection in this place. *He and Samuel went and dwelt (or lodged) in Naioth*, where the school of the prophets was, in Ramah, as in a privileged place, for the Philistines themselves, would not disturb that meeting, chap. x. 10. But Saul having notice of it by some of his spies, ver. 19. sent officers to seize David, ver. 20. and when those did not bring him, sent more; and when those returned not, sent the third time, ver. 21. and when he heard not tidings of those, went himself, ver. 22. So impatient was he in his thirst after David's blood, so restless to compass his design against him, though he saw it baffled by one providence after another, but could not perceive David under the special protection of heaven. It was below the king to go himself on such an errand as this, but persecutors will stoop to any thing, and stick at nothing to gratify their malice. Saul lays aside all public business to hunt David. Now how was David delivered when he was just ready to fall (like his own lamb formerly) into the mouth of the lions? Not as he delivered his lamb, by slaying the lions, or as Elijah was delivered by consuming the messengers with fire from heaven, but by turning the lions for the present into lambs.

1. The messengers, when they came into the congregation where David was among the prophets, the Spirit of God came upon them, and they prophesied, i. e. they joined with the rest in praising God. Instead of seizing David, they themselves were seized. And thus, (1.) God secured David: for either they were put into such an ecstasy by the spirit of the prophesy, that they could not think of any thing else at all, and so forgot their errand, and never minded David; or they were by it put, for the present, into so good a frame, that they could not entertain the thought of doing so ill a thing. (2.) He put an honour upon the sons of the prophets, and the communion of saints, and shewed how he can, when he pleaseth, strike an awe upon the worst of men, by the tokens of his presence in the assemblies of the faithful, and force them to acknowledge, that *God is with them of a truth*, 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. See also the benefit of religious societies, and what good impressions may be made by them on the minds that seemed unfit to receive such impressions. And where may the influence of the Spirit he expected, but in the congregation of the saints? (3.) He magnified his power over the spirits of men. He that made the heart and tongue can manage both to serve his own purposes. Balaam prophesied the happiness of Israel, whom he would have cursed; and some of the Jewish writers think these messengers prophesied of the advancement of David to the throne of Israel.

2. Saul himself was likewise seized with the spirit of prophecy before he came to the place. One would have thought so ill a man as he had been in no danger of being turned into a prophet; yet when God will take this way of protecting David, even Saul is no sooner come (as Bishop Hall expresseth it) within smell of the smoke of Naioth but he prophesieth, as his messengers did, ver. 23. He stripped off his royal robe and warlike habillment, because they were either too fine, or too heavy for this service, and fell into a trance as it should seem, or into a rapture, which continued all that day and night. The saints of Damascus were delivered from the rage of the New Testament Saul, by a change wrought on his spirit, but of another nature from this. This was only amazing, but that sanctifying. This for a day, that for ever. Note, Many have great gifts, and yet no grace; prophecy in Christ's name, and yet are disowned by him, *Matt. vii. 22.* Now the proverb recurs, *Is Saul among the prophets?* See chap. x. 12. Then it was different from what it had been, but now contrary. He is rejected of God, and acted by an evil spirit, and yet among the prophets.

C H A P. XX.

David, having several times narrowly escaped Saul's fury, begins to consider at least, whether it were not necessary for him to retire into the country, and to take up arms in his own defence. But he will not do so during a thing without consulting his faithful friend Jonathan; how that was done, and what passed between them, we have an account in this chapter, where we have as surprising instances of supernatural love, as we had in the chapter before of unnatural hatred. (1.) David complains to Jonathan of his present distress, and engageth him to be his friend, ver. 1—8. (2.) Jonathan faithfully promiseth to get and give him intelligence how his father stood affected to him, and renews the covenant of friendship with him, ver. 9—23. (3.) Jonathan upon trial finds to his grief that his father was implacably enraged against David, ver. 24—34. (4.) He gives David notice of this, according to the appointment between them, ver. 35—42.

1. AND David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and came and said before Jonathan, What have I done? what is mine iniquity? and what is my sin before thy father, that he seeketh my life? 2. And he said unto him, God forbid; thou shalt not die: behold, my father will do nothing either great or small, but that he will shew it me? and why should my father hide this thing from me? it is not so. 3. And David sware moreover, and said, Thy father certainly knoweth that I have found grace in thine eyes, and he saith, Let not Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved: but truly, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death. 4. Then said Jonathan unto David, Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee. 5. And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow is the new moon; and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go that I may hide myself in the field until the third day at even. 6. If thy father at all miss me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me, that he might run to Beth-lehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the family. 7. If he say thus, It is well; thy servant shall have peace: but if he be very wroth, then be sure that evil is determined by him. 8. Therefore thou shalt deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the LORD with thee: notwithstanding, if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself, for why shouldst thou bring me to thy father?

Here, 1. David makes a remonstrance to Jonathan of his present troubles. While Saul lay bound by his trance at Naioth, David escaped to the court, and got to speak with Jonathan. And it was happy for him that he had such a friend at court, when he had such an enemy on the throne. If there be those that hate and despise us, let us not be disturbed at that, for there are those also that love and respect us; God hath set the one over against the other, and so must we. Jonathan was a friend that loved at all times; loved David as well now in distress, and bids him as welcome into his arms, as he had done when he was in his triumph, chap. xviii. 1. and he was a brother that was born for adversity, Prov. xvii. 17. Now, 1. David appeals to Jonathan himself concerning his innocency, and he needed not say much to him for the proof of that, only desires him, if he knew of any just offence he had given his father, he would tell him, that he might humble himself and beg his pardon, *What have I done?* ver. 1. 2. He endeavours to convince him, that, notwithstanding his innocency, Saul sought his life. Jonathan from a principle of filial respect to his father was very loth to believe that he designed, or would ever do so ill a thing, ver. 2. He the rather hoped so, because he knew nothing of any such design he had; and he used to make him privy to all his counsels. Jonathan, as became a dutiful son, endeavoured to cover his father's shame, as far as was consistent with justice and fidelity to David. Charity is not forward to think evil of any, especially of a parent, Cor. xiii. 5. David therefore gives him the assurance of an oath concerning his own danger, swears the peace upon Saul, that he was in fear of his life by him, *As the LORD liveth*, than which nothing more sure in itself; and as *thy soul liveth*, than which nothing more certain to thee: whatever thou thinkest, there is but a step between me and death, ver. 3. And as for Saul's concealing it from Jonathan it was easy to account for that, he knew the friendship between him and David; and therefore, though in other things he advised with him, yet not in that. None more fit than Jonathan to serve him in every design that was just and honourable, but he knew him to be a man of more virtue than to be his confidant in so base a design as the murder of David.

2. Jonathan generously offers him his service, ver. 4. *Whatsoever thou desirest*, (he needed not insert the proviso of lawful and honest, for he knew David too well to think he would ask any thing that was otherwise) *I will even do it for thee.* This is true friendship. Thus Christ testifies his love to us: *Ask and it shall be done for you*; and we must testify ours to him, by keeping his commandments.

3. David only desires him to satisfy himself, and then to satisfy him, whether Saul did really design his death or no. Perhaps David proposed this, more for Jonathan's conviction than his own, for he himself was well satisfied.

1. The method of trial he proposeth was very natural, and would certainly discover how Saul stood affected to him. The two next days Saul was to dine publicly, upon occasion of the solemnities of the new moon, when extraordinary sacrifices were offered, and feasts made upon the sacrifices. Saul was rejected of God, and the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him, and yet he kept up his observance of the holy feasts. There may be the remains of external devotion, where there is nothing but the ruins of real virtue. At these solemn feasts Saul had either all his children to sit with him, and David had a seat as one of them; or all his great officers, and David had a seat as one of them. However it was, David resolved his seat should be empty (and that it never used to be at a sacred feast) those two days, ver. 5. and he would abscond until the solemnity was over, and put it upon this issue; if Saul admitted an excuse for his absence, and dispensed with it, he would conclude he had changed his mind, and was reconciled to him; but if he resented it, and was put into a passion by it, it was easy to conclude he designed him a mischief; since it was certain he did not love him so well, as to desire his presence for any other end, but that he might have an opportunity to do him a mischief, ver. 7.

2. The excuse he desires Jonathan to make for his absence, we have reason to think was true; that he was invited by his elder brother to Beth-lehem, his own city, to celebrate this new-moon with his relations there, because, besides the monthly solemnity, in which they held communion with all Israel, they had now a yearly sacrifice, and a holy feast upon it, for all the family, ver. 6. They kept a day of thanksgiving in their family for the comforts they enjoyed, and of prayer for the continuance of them. By this it appears that the family of David was a very religious family, a house that had a church in it.

3. The arguments he uses with Jonathan to persuade him to do this kindness to him are very pressing, ver. 8. 1. That he had entered into a league of friendship with him, and it was Jonathan's own proposal. *Thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of the Lord with thee.* 2. That he would by no means urge him to espouse his cause, if he were not sure that it was a righteous cause; *if there be iniquity in me, I am loath to far from desiring or expecting, that the covenant between us should bind thee to be a confederate with me in that iniquity, that I shall freely release thee from it, and with that thy hand may be first upon me; stay me thyself.* No honest man will urge his friend to do a dishonest thing for his sake.

9. And Jonathan said, Far be it from thee: for if I knew certainly, that evil were determined by my father to come upon thee, then would not I tell it thee? 10. Then said David to Jonathan, who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly? 11. ¶ And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field. 12. And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have founded my father, about to-morrow any time, or the third day, and behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee; 13. The LORD do so, and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then will I shew it thee and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father. 14. And thou shalt not only while yet I live, shew me the kindness of the LORD, that I die not. 15. But also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no not when the LORD hath cut off the enemies of David, every one from the face of the earth. 16. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies. 17. And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul. 18. Then Jonathan said to David, To-morrow is the new-moon: and thou shalt be missed; because thy seat will be empty. 19. And when thou hast staid three days, then thou shalt go down quickly, and come to the place where thou didst hide thyself, when the business was in hand, and shalt remain by the stone Ezel. 20. And I will shoot three arrows on the side thereof, as though I shot at a mark. 21. And behold, I will send a lad, saying, Go, find out the arrows. If I expressly say unto the lad, Behold, the arrows are on this side of thee, take them; then come thou: for there is peace to thee, and no hurt; as the LORD liveth. 22. But if I say thus unto the young man, Behold, the arrows are beyond thee: go thy way, for the LORD hath sent thee away. 23. And as touching the matter which thou and I have spoken of, behold, the LORD be between thee and me for ever.

Here, 1. Jonathan protests his fidelity to David in his distress. Notwithstanding the mighty confidence David had in Jonathan, yet, because he might have some reason to fear that his father's influence, and his own interest, should make him warp, or grow cool towards him; Jonathan thought it requisite solemnly to renew the professions of his friendship to him, ver. 9. *Far be it from thee to think that I suspect thee of any crime, for which I should either slay thee myself, or deliver thee to my father: no, if thou hast any jealousy of that, Come, let us go into the field,* ver. 11. and talk it over more fully. He doth not challenge him to the field to fight him for an affront, but to fix him in his friendship. He faithfully promiseth him that he would let him know how upon trial he found his father affected towards him, and would make the matter neither better nor worse than it was; *If there be good towards thee, I will shew it thee, that thou mayest be easy,* ver. 12. *if evil, I will send thee away, that thou mayest be safe,* ver. 13. and thus would help to deliver him from the evil, if it were real, and from

the fear of evil, if it were but imaginary. For the confirmation of the promise he appeals to God, 1. As a witness, ver. 12. *O Lord God of Israel, thou knowest I mean sincerely, and think as I speak.* The strength of his passion made the manner of his speaking concise and abrupt. 2. As a judge. *The Lord do so and much more to Jonathan,* ver. 13. *if I speak deceitfully, or break my word with my friend: he expresseth himself thus solemnly, that David might be abundantly assured of his sincerity.* And thus God has confirmed his promise to us, that we might have strong consolation, Heb. vi. 17, 18. Jonathan adds to his protestations his hearty prayers, *The Lord be with thee, to protect and prosper thee, as he hath been formerly with my father,* though now he be withdrawn. This intimates his belief that David would be in his father's place, and his good wishes, that he might prosper in it better than his father now did.

2. He provides for the entail of the covenant of friendship with David upon his posterity, ver. 14, 15, 16. he engageth David to be a friend to his family when he is gone, ver. 15. *Thou shalt promise that thou wilt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever.* This he spoke from a natural affection that he had to his children, whom he desired it might go well with when he was gone, and for whose future welfare he desired to improve his present interest. It also speaks his firm belief of David's advancement, and that it would be in the power of his hand to do a kindness or unkindness to his seed; for in process of time, the Lord would cut off all his enemies, Saul himself not excepted; then do not thou cut off thy kindness from my house, nor revenge my father's wrongs upon my children. The house of David must likewise be bound to the house of Jonathan from generation to generation: he made a covenant, ver. 16. *with the house of David.* Note, True friends cannot but covet to transmit to theirs after them their mutual affections. *Thine own friend, and thy father's friend forjoke not.* This kindness, 1. He calls the kindness of God, because it is such kindness as God shews to those whom he takes into covenant with himself; for he is a God to them, and to their seed: they are beloved for the father's sake. He secures it by an imprecation, ver. 16. *The Lord require it at thy hand of David's seed* (for of David himself he had no suspicion) *if they prove to far David's enemies, as to deal wrongfully with the posterity of Jonathan, David's friend.* He feared lest David, or some of his, should hereafter be tempted, for the clearing and confirming of their title to the throne, to do by his seed as Abimelech had done by the sons of Gideon, Judg. ix. 5. and this he would effectually prevent: but the friendship entailed, is purely generous, and has nothing of self in it: it was because he loved him as he loved his own soul, and therefore desired that he and his might be loved by him. David, though now in disgrace at court and in distress, was as amiable in the eyes of Jonathan as ever he had been; and he loved him never the less for his father's hating him; so pure were the principles on which his friendship was built. Having himself sworn to David, he caused David to swear to him, and (as we read it) to swear again, which David consented to: for he that bears on honest mind doth not startle at assurances; to swear by his love to him, which he looked upon as a sacred thing. Jonathan's heart was so much upon it, that when they parted this time, he concludes with a solemn appeal to God, *The Lord be between thee and me for ever,* ver. 23. i. e. God himself be judge between us and our families for ever, if on either side this love of friendship be violated. It was in remembrance of this covenant that David was kind to Mephibosheth, 2 Sam. ix. 7. xxi. 7. It will be a kindness to ourselves and ours, to secure an interest in those whom God favours, and to make his friends ours.

3. He settles the method of intelligence, and by what signs and tokens he would give him notice how his father stood affected towards him. He would be missed the first day, or at least the second day of the new-moon, and would be enquired after, ver. 18. On the third day, by which time he would be returned from Bethlehem, he must be at such a place, ver. 19. and Jonathan would come towards that place with his bows and arrows to shoot for diversion, ver. 20. would send his lad to fetch his arrows; and if shot short of the lad, David must take it for a signal, and not be afraid to shew his head, ver. 21. but if he shot beyond the lad, it was a signal of danger, and he must shift for his safety, ver. 22. This expedient he fixed, lest he should not have the opportunity, which yet it proved he had, of talking with him, and making the report by word of mouth.

24. ¶ So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat. 25. And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty. 26. Nevertheless Saul spake not any thing that day: for he thought, Something hath befallen him, he is not clean; surely he is not clean. 27. And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday nor to day? 28. And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me, to go to Beth-lehem: 29. And he said, Let me go I pray thee, for our family hath a sacrifice in the city, and my brother, he hath commanded me to be there; and now if I have found favour in thine eyes, let me get away, I pray thee, and see my brethren: Therefore he cometh not unto the king's table. 30. Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? 31. For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom: wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die. 32. And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done? 33. And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him; whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. 34. So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month; for he was grieved for David; because his father had done him shame.

Jonathan

Jonathan is here effectually convinced of that which he was so loth to believe, that his father had an implacable enmity to David, and would certainly be the death of him if it were in his power; and he had like to have paid very dear himself for the conviction.

1. David is missed from the feast on the first day, but nothing is said to him. *The king sat upon his seat, to feast upon the peace-offerings, as at other times, ver. 25.* and yet had his heart as full of envy and malice against David as it would hold: he should first have been reconciled to him, and then come and offered his gift; but instead of that, he hoped at this feast to drink the blood of David. What an abomination was that sacrifice, which was brought with such a wicked mind as this! *Prov. xxi. 27.* When the king came to take his seat, Jonathan arose in reverence to him, both as his father, and as his sovereign; every one knew his place, but David's was empty. It did not use to be so. None more constant than he in attending holy duties; nor had he been absent now, but that he must have come in peril of his life; self-preservation obliged him to withdraw. In imminent peril present opportunities may be waived, nay we ought not to throw ourselves into the mouth of danger. Christ himself absconded often till he knew that his hour was come. But that day Saul took no notice that he missed David, but said within himself, *Surely he is not clean, ver. 26.* Some ceremonial pollution has befallen him, which forbids him to eat of the holy things, till he has washed his clothes, and bathed his flesh in water, and been unclean until the even. Saul knew what conscience David made of the law, and that he would rather keep away from the holy feast, than come in his uncleanness. Blessed be God, no uncleanness is now a restraint upon us, but what we may by faith and repentance be washed from in the fountain opened, *Psal. cxxvi. 6.*

2. He is enquired for the second day, *ver. 27.* Saul asked Jonathan, who he knew was his confidant, *Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat?* He was his only son by marriage, but he calls him in disdain the son of Jesse. He asks for him, as if he were not pleased that he should be absent from a religious feast; and so it should be an example to masters of families to see it, that those under their charge be not absent from the worship of God, either in public or in the family. It is an ill thing for us, except in case of necessity, to omit an opportunity of our stated attendance on God in solemn ordinances. Thomas lost a sight of Christ, by being once absent from a meeting of the disciples. But that which displeased Saul was, that hereby he missed an opportunity he expected to do David a mischief.

3. Jonathan makes his excuse, *ver. 28, 29.* 1. That he was absent upon a good occasion; keeping the feast in another place, though not here, sent for by his elder brother, who was now more respectful to him than he had been, *chap. xvii. 28.* and that he was gone to pay his respects to his relations, for the keeping up of brotherly love: and no master would deny a servant liberty to do that in due time. He pleads, 1. That he did not go without leave humbly asked and obtained from Jonathan, who, as his superior officer, was proper to be applied to for it. Thus he represents David, as not wanting in any instance of respect and duty to the government.

4. Saul hereupon breaks out into a most extravagant passion, and rages like a lion disappointed of his prey. David was out of his reach, but he falls foul upon Jonathan for his sake, *ver. 30, 31.* gave him base language, not fit for a gentleman, a prince, to give to any man, especially his own son, heir apparent to his crown, a son that served him, the greatest stay and ornament of his family, before a deal of company, at a feast, when all should be in good humour, at a sacred feast, by which all irregular passions should be mortified and subdued; yet he doth in effect call him, 1. A bastard: *Thou son of the perverse rebellious woman;* that is, according to the foolish filthy language of men's brutish passion now-days, Thou son of a whore. He tells him he was born to the confusion of his mother, i. e. he had given the world cause to suspect that he was not the legitimate son of Saul, because he loved him whom Saul hated, and supported him who would be the destruction of their family. 2. A traitor. *Thou son of perverse rebellion,* so the word is, i. e. thou perverse rebel. At other times he reckoned no counsellor or commander he had more trusty and well-beloved than Jonathan; yet now in his passion, he represents him as dangerous to his crown and life. 3. A fool. *Thou hast chosen the son of Jesse for thy friend to thine own confusion,* for while he lives thou shalt never be established. Jonathan indeed did wisely and well for himself and family, to secure an interest in David, whom heaven had destined to the throne; yet for this he is branded as most impolitic. It is good taking God's people for our people, and going with those that have him with them, and will prove to our advantage at last, however for the present it may be thought a disparagement, and a pre-judice to our secular interest. It is probable Saul knew that David was anointed to the kingdom, by the same hand that anointed him, and then, not Jonathan, but himself was the fool, to think to defeat the counsels of God. Yet nothing will serve him but David must die, and Jonathan must fetch him to execution. See how ill Saul's passion looks, and let it warn us against the indulgence of any thing like it in ourselves. Anger is madness, and he that hates his brother is a murderer.

5. Jonathan is sorely grieved and put into disorder by his father's barbarous passion; and the more because he had hoped better things, *ver. 2.* He was troubled for his father that he should be such a brute; troubled for his friend, and whom he knew to be a friend of God, that he should be so basely abused; he was grieved for David, *ver. 34.* and troubled for himself too, because his father had done him shame, and though most unjustly, yet he must submit to it. One would pity Jonathan to see how he was put, 1. Into the peril of sin. Much ado that wife and good man had to keep his temper upon such a provocation as this. His father's reflections upon himself he made no return to; it becomes inferior to bear with meekness and silence the contempts put upon them in wrath and passion. *When thou art the anvil lie thou still.* But his dooming David to death he could not bear; to that he replied with some heat, *ver. 32. Wherefore shall he be slain? What has he done?* Generous spirits can much easier bear to be abused themselves, than to hear their friends abused. 2. Into the peril of death. Saul was now so outrageous that he threw his javelin at Jonathan, *ver. 33.* In great care he seemed to be, *ver. 31.* that Jonathan should be established in his kingdom, and yet now he himself aims at his life. What fools, what savage beasts and worse doth anger make men! How necessary is it to put a hook in its nose, and a bridle in its jaws! Jonathan was fully satisfied that evil was determined against David, which put him out of frame exceedingly; he rose from table, as it was time when his life was struck at, and would eat no meat, for they were not to eat of their holy things in their mourning. All the guests we may suppose were discomposed, and the mirth of the feast spoiled. *He that is cruel, troubles his own flesh, Prov. xi. 17.*

35. ¶ And it came to pass in the morning, that Jonathan went out into the field, at the time appointed with David; and a little lad with him. 36. And he said unto his lad, Run, find out now the arrows which

I shoot. And as the lad ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. 37. And when the lad was come to the place of the arrow which Jonathan had shot, Jonathan cried after the lad, and said, Is not the arrow beyond thee? 38. And Jonathan cried after the lad, Make speed, haste, stay not. And Jonathan's lad gathered up the arrows, and came to his master. 39. But the lad knew not any thing: only Jonathan and David knew the matter. 40. And Jonathan gave his artillery unto his lad, and said unto him, Go, carry them to the city. 41. ¶ And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded. 42. And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

Here is, 1. Jonathan's faithful performance of his promise, to give David notice of the success of his dangerous experiment. He went at the time and to the place appointed, *ver. 35.* within sight of which he knew David lay hid; sent his footboy to fetch his arrows, which he would shoot at random, *ver. 36.* gave David the fatal signal, by shooting an arrow beyond the lad, *ver. 37.* Is not the arrow beyond thee? That word [beyond] David knew the meaning of better than the lad. Jonathan dismissed the lad, who knew nothing of the matter, and finding the coast clear and no danger of a discovery, he presumed upon one minute's personal conversation with David, after he had bid him flee for his life.

2. The most sorrowful parting of these two friends, who for aught appears never came together again but once, and that was by stealth in a wood, *chap. xxiii. 16.* 1. David addressed himself to Jonathan with the reverence of a servant rather than the freedom of a friend; he fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times, as one deeply sensible of his obligations to him for the good services he had done him. 2. They took leave of each other with the greatest affection imaginable, with kisses and tears: they wept on each other's neck till David exceeded, *ver. 41.* The separation of two such faithful lovers was equally grievous to them both, but David's case was the more deplorable; for when Jonathan was returning to his family and friends, David was leaving all his comforts, even those of God's sanctuary, and therefore his grief exceeded Jonathan's; or perhaps it was because his temper was more tender and his passions stronger. 3. They referred themselves to the covenant of friendship that was between them, both of them comforting themselves with that in this mournful separation, *we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord,* for ourselves and our heirs, that we and they will be faithful and kind to each other from generation to generation. Thus while we are at home in the body and absent from the Lord, this is our comfort, that he has made with us an everlasting covenant.

C H A P. XXI.

David has now quite taken leave both of Saul's court, and of his camp, has bid farewell to his alter idem, the beloved Jonathan; and from henceforward to the end of this book he is looked upon and treated as an out-law, and proclaimed a traitor; we still find him shifting from place to place for his own safety, and Saul pursuing him. His troubles are very particularly related in this and the following chapters, not only to be a key to the Psalms, but that he might be, as other prophets, an example, to the saints in all ages, of suffering affliction and of patience; and, especially, that he might be a type of Christ, who, being anointed to the kingdom, humbled himself, and was therefore highly exalted. But the example of the suffering Jesus was a copy without a blot, that of David was not so; witness the records of this chapter, where we find David in his flight, 1. Imposing upon Ahimelech the priest, to get from him both victuals and arms, *ver. 1—9.* 2. Imposing upon Achish, king of Gath, by feigning himself mad, *ver. 10—15.* Justly are troubles called temptations, for many are by them drawn into sin.

1. THEN came David to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why art thou alone, and no man with thee? 2. And David laid unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place. 3. Now therefore what is under thine hand? Give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present. 4. And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. 5. And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel. 6. So the priest gave him hallowed bread; for there was no bread there, but the shew-bread that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away. 7. Now a certain man of the servants of Saul was there that day detained before the

the LORD; and his name was Doeg, an Edomite, the chiefest of the herdmen that belonged to Saul. 8. ¶ And David said unto Ahimelech, And is there not here under thine hand spear or sword? for I have neither brought my sword nor my weapons with me, because the king's business required haste. 9. And the priest said, The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom thou slewest in the valley of Elah, behold, it is here wrapt in a cloth behind the ephod: if thou wilt take that, take it: for there is no other save that here. And David said, There is none like that, give it me.

Here, 1. David in distress flies to the tabernacle of God, now pitched at Nob, supposed to be a city in the tribe of Benjamin. Since Shiloh was forsaken, the tabernacle often sitted, though the ark still remained at Kirjath-jearim. Hither David came in his flight from Saul's fury, ver. 1. and applied himself to Ahimelech the priest. Samuel the prophet could not protect him, Jonathan the prince could not; he therefore has recourse next to Ahimelech the priest. He foresees he must now be an exile, and therefore comes to the tabernacle, 1. To take dear leave of it, for he knows not when he shall see it again, and nothing will be more afflictive to him in his banishment than his distance from the house of God, and his restraint from public ordinances, as appears by many of his Psalms. He had given an affectionate farewell to his friend Jonathan, and cannot go till he has given the like to the tabernacle. 2. To enquire of the Lord there, and to beg direction from him in the way both of duty and safety; his case being difficult and dangerous. That this was his business, appears chap. xxii. 10. where it is said that Ahimelech enquired of the Lord for him, as he had done formerly, ver. 15. It is a great comfort to us in a day of trouble, that we have a God to go to, to whom we may open our case, and from whom we may ask and expect direction.

2. Ahimelech the priest is surprised to see him in so poor an equipage; having heard that he was fallen into disgrace at court, he looked fly upon him, as most are apt to do upon their friends when the world frowns upon them. He was afraid of incurring Saul's displeasure by entertaining him, and took notice how mean a figure he now made to what he used to make. *Why art thou alone?* He had come with him, as appears Mark ii. 26. but they were only his own servants; he had none of the courtiers, no persons of quality with him, as he used to have at other times, when he came to enquire of the Lord. He saith, Psalm xlii. 4. he was wont to go with a multitude to the house of God, and having now but two or three with him, Ahimelech might well say, *Why art thou alone?* He that was suddenly advanced from the solitude of a shepherd's life to the crowds and hurries of the camp, is now as soon reduced to the desolate condition of an exile, and is alone like a sparrow on the house-top. Such changes are there in this world, and so uncertain are its smiles! Those that are courted to-day, may be deserted to-morrow.

5. David, under pretence of being sent by Saul upon public services, solicits Ahimelech to supply his present wants, ver. 2, 3. Here David did not carry it like himself; he told Ahimelech a gross untruth, that Saul had ordered him business to dispatch, that his attendants were dismissed to such a place; and that he was charged secrecy, and therefore durst not communicate it, no not to the priest himself. This was nothing so; it was all false: What shall we say to this? The scripture doth not conceal it, and we dare not justify it: it was ill done, and proved of ill consequence: for it occasioned the death of the priests of the Lord, as David reflected upon it afterwards with regret, chap. xxii. 22. It was needless for him thus to dissemble with the priest, for we may suppose, if he had told him the truth he would have sheltered and relieved him as readily as Samuel did, and would have known the better how to advise him and inquire of God for him. People should be free with their faithful ministers. David was a man of great faith and courage, and yet now both failed him, and he fell thus foully through fear and cowardice, and both owing to the weakness of his faith. Had he trusted God aright, he would not have used such a sorry sinful shift as this for his own preservation. It is written, not for our imitation, no, not in the greatest streights, but for our admonition. *Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall:* and let us all pray daily, Lord, lead us not into temptation. Let us all take occasion from this to lament, 1. The weakness and infirmity of good men; the best are not perfect on this side heaven. It is possible there may be true grace where yet there are many failings. 2. The wickedness of bad times, which forceth good men into such straits as prove temptations too strong for them. Oppression makes a wife man do foolishly.

Two things David begged of Ahimelech, bread and a sword.

1. He wanted bread, five loaves, ver. 3. Travelling was then troublesome, when men generally carried their provisions with them instead of specie, having little money, and no public houses; else David had not now been to seek for bread. It seems David had known the seed of the righteous begging bread, occasionally, but not constantly, Psalm xxxvii. 25.

Now, (1.) The priest objected that he had none but hallowed bread, shew-bread, which had stood a week on the golden table in the sanctuary, and was taken thence for the use of the priests and their families, ver. 4. It seems the priests kept no good house, but wanted either a heart to be hospitable, or rather provisions wherewithal. Ahimelech thinks the young men that attended David might not eat of this bread, unless they had for some time abstained from women, even from their own wives; this was required at the giving of the law, Exod. xix. 15. but otherwise we never find this made the matter of any ceremonial purity on the one side, or pollution on the other. And therefore the priest here seems to be over nice, not to say superstitious.

(2.) David pleads that he and they that were with him in this case of necessity might lawfully eat of the hallowed bread, for they were not only able to answer his terms of keeping from women for three days past, but that the vessels, i. e. the bodies, of the young men were holy, being possessed in sanctification and honour at all times. 1 Thess. iv. 4—5. and therefore God would take particular care of them, that they wanted not necessary supports, and would have his priests to do so. And being thus holy, holy things were not forbidden to them. Poor and pious Israelites were in effect priests to God, and rather than be starved might feed upon the bread which was appropriated to the priests. Believers are spiritual priests, and the offerings of the Lord shall be their inheritance; they eat the bread of their God. He pleads that the bread is in a manner common, now that which was primarily the religious use of it was over; especially, (as our margin reads) *when there is this day other bread set.* (ver. 6.) *sanctified this day in the vessel,* and put in the room of it upon the table. This was David's plea, and the Son of David approves it, and shews from it, that mercy is to be preferred before sacrifice, that ritual observances must give way to moral duties; and that they may be done in a case of an urgent providential necessity, which may not otherwise be done. He brings it to justify his disciples in pluck-

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ing the ears of corn on the sabbath-day, for which the Pharisees censured them, Matt. xii. 3, 4.

(3.) Ahimelech hereupon supplies him. He gave him hallowed bread, ver. 6. and some think it was about this that he enquired of the Lord, chap. xxii. 10. as a faithful servant, he would not dispose of his master's provisions without his master's leave. This bread, we may suppose, was the more agreeable to David for its being hallowed, so precious were all sacred things to him. The shew-bread was but twelve loaves in all, yet out of this he gives David five, ver. 3, though they had no more in the house; but he trusted in providence.

2. He wanted a sword. Persons of quality, though officers of the army, did not then wear their swords so constantly as now they do, else sure David had not been without one; it was a wonder Jonathan did not furnish him with his, as he had done, chap. xviii. 4. However it happened he had now no weapons with him, the reason of which he pretends to be, because he came away in haste, ver. 8. Those that are furnished with the sword of the Spirit, and the shield of faith, cannot be disarmed of them, nor need they be to seek or out of the way at any time. But the priests it seems had no swords, the weapons of their warfare were not carnal, there was not a sword to be found about the tabernacle, but the sword of Goliath, which was laid up behind the ephod, as a monument of that glorious victory David obtained over him; probable David had an eye to that, when he asked the priest to help him with a sword; for that being mentioned, O! saith he, *there is none like that, give it me*, ver. 9. He could not use Saul's armour, for he had not proved it; but this sword of Goliath he had made trial of, and done execution with; by this it appears he was now well grown in strength and stature, that he could wear and wield such a sword as that. God had taught his hands to war, so that he could do wonders, Psalm xviii. 34. Two things we may observe concerning this sword. 1. That God had graciously given it him, as a pledge of his singular favour; so that whenever he drew it, nay, whenever he looked upon it, it would be a great support to his faith, by bringing to mind that great instance of the particular care and countenance of the divine providence he was then under. Experiences are great encouragements. 2. That he had gratefully given it back to God, dedicating it to him, and to his honour, as a token of his thankfulness; and now in his distress it stood him in mighty stead. Note, What we devote to God's praise, and serve him with, is most likely to redound one way or other to our own comfort and benefit. What we gave we have.

Thus was David well furnished with arms and victuals, but it fell out very unhappily, that there was one of Saul's servants then attending before the Lord, Doeg by name, that proved a base traitor, both to David and to Ahimelech. He was by birth an Edomite, ver. 7. and though professed to the Jewish religion, to get the preferment he now had under Saul, yet he retained the ancient and hereditary enmity of Edom to Israel. He was master of the herds, which perhaps was then a place of as much honour as master of the horse is now. Some occasion or other he had at this time to wait on the priest, either to be purified from some pollution, or to pay some vow; but whatever his business was, it is said he was detained before the Lord. He must attend and could not help it, but he was sick of the service, snuffed at it, and said, *What a weariness it is!* Mal. i. 13. He would rather have been any where else than before the Lord, and therefore instead of minding the business he came about, was plotting to do David a mischief, and to be revenged on Ahimelech for detaining him. God's sanctuary could never secure itself from such wolves in sheep's clothing. See Gal. ii. 4.

10. ¶ And David arose, and fled that day for fear of Saul, and went to Achish the king of Gath. 11. And the servants of Achish said unto him, Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands? 12. And David laid up these words in his heart, and was sore afraid of Achish the king of Gath: 13. And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard. 14. Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me. 15. Have I need of mad-men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the mad-man in my presence? shall this fellow come into mine house?

David though king elect is here an exile: designed to be master of vast treasures, yet had been just now begging his bread: anointed to the crown, and yet here forced to run his country: thus do God's providences sometimes seem to run counter to his promises, for the trial of his people's faith, and the glorifying of his name, in the accomplishment of his counsels, notwithstanding the difficulties that lay in the way. Here is,

1. David's flight into the land of the Philistines, where he hoped to be hid, and to remain incognito, in the court or camp of Achish, king of Gath, ver. 10. Israel's darling is necessitated to quit the land of Israel, and he that was the Philistines' great enemy, upon I know not what inducements, goes to seek for shelter among them. It should seem that as though the Israelites loved him, yet the king of Israel had a personal enmity to him, which obliged him to leave his own country; so, though the Philistines hated him, yet the king of Gath had a personal kindness for him, valuing his merit, and perhaps the more for his killing Goliath of Gath, who, it may be, had been no friend to Achish. To him David now went directly, as to one he could confide in, as afterwards, chap. xxvii. 2, 3. and Achish would now have protected him, but that he was afraid of disoblighing his own people by it. God's persecuted people have often found better usage from Philistines than from Israelites; in the Gentile theatres, than in the Jewish synagogues: the king of Judah imprisoned Jeremiah, and the king of Babylon let him at liberty.

2. The disgust which the servants of Achish took at his being there, and their complaints of it to Achish, ver. 11. *Is not this David?* Is not this he that has triumphed over the Philistines, witness that burden of the song which was so much talked of; *Saul has slain his thousands*, but David, this very man, *his ten thousands*. Nay, is not this he that (if our intelligence from the land of Israel be true) is, or is to be, *king of the land*? As such he must be an enemy to our country, and is it safe or honourable for us to protect or entertain such a man? Achish perhaps had intimated to them that it would be policy to entertain David, because he was an enemy to Saul, and he might be hereafter a friend to them; it is common for the outlaws of

a nation to be sheltered by the enemies of that nation; but the servants of Achish disagreed to his politics, and thought it not all fit, that he should stay among them.

3. The fright which this put David into, though he had some reason to put a confidence in Achish, yet when he perceived the servants of Achish jealous of him, he began to be afraid that Achish would be obliged to deliver him up to them, and he was *fore afraid*, ver. 12. and perhaps he was the more apprehensive of his own danger, when he was thus discovered, because he wore Goliath's sword, which we may suppose was well known at Gath, and with which he had reason to expect they would cut off his head, as he had cut off Goliath's with it. David now learned by experience what he has taught us, *Psal. cxviii. 9. that it is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes.* Men of high degree are a lie, and if we make them our hope, they may prove our fear. It was at this time that David penned the sixty-sixth Psalm, (Mithcham, a Golden Psalm) *when the Philistines took him in Gath, where having shewed before God his distresses, he resolves, ver. 3. what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee; and therefore, ver. 11. I will not be afraid what man can do unto me, no not the sons of the giant.*

4. The course he took to get out of their hands. *He feigned himself mad*, ver. 13. he used the gestures and fashions of a natural fool, or one that was gone out of his wits; supposing they would be ready enough to believe that the disgrace he was fallen into, and the troubles he was now in, had driven him distracted. This dissimulation of his cannot be justified, it was a mean thing thus to disparage himself, and not agreeing with truth thus to misrepresent himself, and therefore not becoming the honour and sincerity of such a man as David: yet it may be excused, for it was not a downright lie, and it was like a stratagem in war, by which he imposed upon his enemies for the preservation of his own life. What David did here in pretence, and for his own safety, which made it excusable, drunkards do really, and only to gratify a base lust, they make fools of themselves, and change their behaviour; their words and actions commonly are either as silly and ridiculous as an idiot's, or as furious and outrageous as a madman's, which has oft made me wonder, that ever men of sense and honour should allow themselves in it.

5. His escape by this means, ver. 14, 15. I am apt to think Achish was aware that the delirium was but counterfeit, but being desirous to protect David (as we find afterwards he was very kind to him, even when the lords of the Philistines favoured him not, chap. xxviii. 1, 2. xxix. 6.) took on him to his servants, that he really thought he was mad, and therefore had reason to question whether it was David or no; or, if it were, they needed not fear him, what harm could he do them now his reason was departed from him? They suspected that Achish was inclined to entertain him; not I, saith he, he is a madman, I will have nothing to do with him, you need not fear that I should employ him, or give him any countenance. He humours the thing well enough, when he asks, *Have I need of madmen? Shall this fool come into my house?* I will shew him no kindness, but then you shall do him no hurt, for if he be a madman, he is to be pitied. He therefore drove him away, as it is in the title of *Psal. xxxiv.* which David penned upon this occasion, and an excellent *Psal.* it is, and shews, that he did not change his spirit when he changed his behaviour, but even in the greatest difficulties and hurries his heart was fixed: trusting in the Lord; and he concludes that Psalm with this assurance, that *none of them that trust in God shall be desolate*, though they may be, as he now was, solitary and distressed, persecuted, but not forsaken.

C H A P. XXII.

David being driven from Achish, returns into the land of Israel to be hunted by Saul. 1. David sets up his standard in the cave of Adullam, entertains his relations, ver. 1. Lifts soldiers, ver. 2. But removes his aged parents to a more quiet settlement, ver. 3, 4. and has the prophet Gad for his counsellor, ver. 5. 2. Saul resolves to pursue him and find him out, complains of his servants and Jonathan, ver. 6—8. and finding by Doeg's information that Ahimelech had been kind to David, he ordered him and all the priests that were with him, eighty-five in all, to be put to death, and all that belonged to them destroyed, ver. 9—19. from the barbarous execution of this sentence, Abiathar escaped to David, ver. 20—23.

1. DAVID therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren, and all his father's house heard it, they went down thither to him. 2. And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain over them: and there was with him about four hundred men. 3. ¶ And David went thence to Mizpeh of Moab; and he said unto the king of Moab: Let my father and my mother, I pray thee, come forth, and be with you, till I know what God will do for me. 4. And he brought them before the king of Moab: and they dwelt with him all the while that David was in the hold. 5. ¶ And the prophet Gad said unto David, Abide not in the hold: depart, and get thee into the land of Judah. Then David departed, and came into the forest of Hareth.

Here, 1. David shelters himself in the cave of Adullam, ver. 1. Whether it was a natural or artificial fastness does not appear; it is probable the access to it was difficult that David thought himself able, with Goliath's sword, to keep it against all the forces of Saul, and therefore buried himself alive in it while he was waiting to see (as he saith here, ver. 3.) *what God would do with him.* The promise of the kingdom, implied a promise of preservation to it, and yet David used proper means for his own safety, else he had tempted God. He did not do any thing that aimed to destroy Saul, but only to secure himself. He that might have done good service to his country as a judge or general, is here shut up in a cave, and thrown by as a vessel in which there was no pleasure. We must not think it strange, if sometimes shining lights be thus eclipsed and hid under a bushel. Perhaps, the apostle refers to this instance of David, among others, when he speaks of some of the old testament worthies that *wandered in deserts, in dens and caves of the earth*, Heb. xi. 38. It was at this time that David penned the

hundred and forty-second Psalm, which is entitled, *A prayer when he was in the cave*; and there he complains that *no man would know him*, and that refuge failed him, but hopes that *shortly the righteous should compass him about.*

2. Thither his relations flocked to him, *his brethren and all his father's house*, to be protected by him, to give assistance to him, and to take their lot with him; *A brother is born for adversity.* Now Joab and Abishai, and the rest of his relations, came to him to suffer and venture with him, in hopes shortly to be advanced with him; and they were so. The first three of his worthies were those that first owned him when he was in the cave, 1 Chron. xi. 15. &c.

3. Here he began to raise forces in his own defence, ver. 2. He found by the late experiments he had made, that he could not save himself by flight, and therefore was necessitated to do it by force; wherein he never acted offensively, never offered any violence to his prince, nor gave any disturbance to the peace of the kingdom, but only used his forces as a guard to his own person. But whatever defence his soldiers were to him, they did him no great credit, for the regiment he had was made up not of great men, or rich men, or stout men, no, nor good men, but men in distress, in debt, and discontented, men of broken fortunes and restless spirits, that were put to their shifts, and knew not well what to do with themselves. When David had fixed his head quarters in the cave of Adullam, they came and lifted themselves under him to the number of about four hundred. See what weak instruments God sometimes makes use of, by which to bring about his own purposes. The son of David is ready to receive distressed souls, that will appoint him their captain and be commanded by him.

4. He took care to settle his parents in a place of safety; no such place could he find in all the land of Israel, while Saul was so bitterly enraged against him, and all that belonged to him for his sake: he therefore goes with him to the king of Moab, and puts them under his protection, ver. 3, 4. Observe here, (1.) With what a tender concern he provided for his aged parents. It was not fit that they should be exposed either to the frights or to the fatigues which he must expect during his struggle with Saul, their age would by no means bear it; therefore the first thing he doth is to find them a quiet habitation, whatever became of himself. Let children learn from hence to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents, 1 Tim. v. 4. in every thing consulting their ease and satisfaction, though never so highly preferred, and never so much employed, let them not forget their aged parents. (2.) With what an humble faith he expects the issues of his present distress, till I know what God will do for me. He expresses his hopes very modestly, as one that had entirely cast himself upon God, and committed his way to him, expecting a good issue, not from his own arts, as arms, or merits, but from what the wisdom, power, and goodness of God would do for him. Now David's father and mother forsook him, but God did not, *Psal. xxvii. 10.*

5. He had the advice and assistance of the prophet Gad, who probably, was one of the sons of the prophets that were brought up under Samuel, and was by him recommended to David for his chaplain or spiritual guide; being a prophet, he would pray for him and instruct him in the minds of God; and David, though he was himself a prophet, was glad of his assistance. He advised him to go into the land of Judah, ver. 5. as one that was confident of his own innocency, and was well assured of the divine protection, and was desirous, even in his present hard circumstances, to do some service to his tribe and country. Let him not be ashamed to own his own cause, nor decline the succours that would be offered him. Animated by this word, there he determined to appear publicly. Thus are the steps of a good man ordered by the Lord.

6. ¶ When Saul heard that David was discovered, and the men that were with him, (now Saul abode in Gibeah, under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him.) 7. Then Saul said unto his servants that stood about him, Hear now ye Benjamites, will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards, and make you all captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds? 8. That all of you have conspired against me, and there is none that sheweth me that my son hath made a league with the son of Jesse, and there is none of you that is sorry for me, or sheweth unto me, that my son hath stirred up my servant against me, to lie in wait, as at this day? 9. ¶ Then answered Doeg, the Edomite, (which was set over the servants of Saul) and said; I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. 10. And he enquired of the LORD for him: and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine. 11. Then the king sent to call Ahimelech the priest, the son of Ahitub, and all his father's house, the priests that were in Nob: and they came all of them to the king. 12. And Saul said, Hear now, thou son of Ahitub: and he answered, Here I am, my lord. 13. And Saul said unto him, Why have ye conspired against me, thou and the son of Jesse; in that thou hast given him bread, and a sword, and hast inquired of God for him, that he should rise against me to lie in wait, as at this day? 14. Then Ahimelech answered the king, and said, And who is so faithful among all thy servants, as David, which is the king's son-in-law, and goeth at thy bidding, and is honourable in thine house. 15. Did I then begin to enquire of God for him? be it far from me: let not the king impute any thing unto his servant, nor to all the house of my father; for thy servant knew nothing of all this, less or more. 16. And the king said, Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou and all thy father's house. 17. ¶ And the king said unto the footmen that stood about him, Turn, and slay the priests of the LORD, because their hand also is with David, and because they knew when he fled, and did not shew it to me. But the servants of the king would

would not put forth their hand to fall upon the priests of the LORD. 18. And the king said to Doeg, Turn thou and fall upon the priests. And Doeg the Edomite turned, and he fell upon the priests, and slew on that day fourscore and five persons that did wear a linen ephod. 19. And Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword.

We have seen the progress of David's troubles; now here we have the progress of Saul's wickedness. He seems to have laid aside the thoughts of all other business, and to have devoted himself wholly to the pursuit of David. He heard, at length, by the common fame of the country, that David was discovered, i. e. that he appeared publicly, and listed men into his service; and hereupon called all his servants about him, and sat down under a tree, or grove, in the high place at Gibeah, with his spear in his hand for a scepter, intimating the force by which he designed to rule, and the present temper of his spirit, or his distemper rather, which was to kill all that stood in his way.

In his bloody court of inquisition,

1. Saul seeks for information against David and Jonathan, ver. 7, 8. Two things he was willing to suspect and desirous to see proved, that he might wreak his malice upon two of the best and most excellent men he had about him. (1.) That his servant David did lie in wait for him and seek his life, which was utterly false. He really sought David's life, and therefore pretended that David sought his life, though he could not charge him with any overt act that gave the least umbrage or suspicion. (2.) That his son Jonathan stirred him up to do so, and was confederate with him in compassing and imagining the death of the king. This also was notoriously false. A league of friendship there was between David and Jonathan, but no conspiracy in any evil thing; none of the articles of their covenant carried any mischief to Saul. If Jonathan had agreed, after the death of Saul to resign to David, in compliance with the revealed will of God, what harm would that do to Saul? Yet thus the best friends to their prince and country have oft been odiously represented as enemies to both: even Christ himself was so. He takes it for granted that Jonathan and David were in a plot against him, his crown and dignity, and is displeased with his servants that they do not give him information of it, supposing that they could not but know it, whereas really there was no such thing. See the nature of a jealous malice, and its art of wheedling, to extort discoveries of things that are not. He looks upon all about him as his enemies, because they do not just say as he saith; and tells them, 1. That they were very unwise, and acted against the interest both of their tribe (for they were Benjamites, and David, if he were advanced, would bring the honour into Judah which was now in Benjamin) and of their families; for David would never be able to give them such rewards as he had for them, of fields and vineyards, and such preferment, to be colonels and captains. 2. That they were unfaithful, you have conspired against me. What a continual toils and torment are they in that give way to a spirit of jealousy! If a ruler hearken to lies, all his servants are wicked, Prov. xxix. 12. i. e. they seem to be so in his eyes. 3. That they were very unkind. He thought to work upon their good nature with that word, there is none of you that is so much as sorry for me, or solicitous for me, as some read it. By these reasonings he stirred them up to act vigorously as the instruments of his malice, that they might take away his suspicions of them.

2. Though he could not learn any thing from his servants against David or Jonathan, yet he got information from Doeg, against Ahimelech the priest.

1. An indictment is brought against Ahimelech by Doeg, and he himself is evidence against him, ver. 9, 10. Perhaps Doeg, as bad as he was, had not given this information if Saul had not extorted it, for had he been very forward to it he would have done it sooner: but now he thinks they must be all traitors, if none of them be accusers, and therefore tells Saul what kindness Ahimelech had shewed to David, which he himself happened to be an eye-witness of. He had enquired of God for him, which the priest used not to do but for public persons and about public affairs, and that he had furnished him with bread and a sword. All this was true: but it was not the whole truth; he ought to have told Saul further, that David had made Ahimelech believe he was then going upon the king's business; so that what service he did to David, however it proved, was designed in honour to Saul, and this would have cleared Ahimelech, whom Saul had in his power, and would have thrown all the blame upon David, who was out of his reach.

2. Ahimelech is seized, or summoned rather to appear before the king, and upon this indictment he is arraigned. The king sent for him and all the priests that then attended the sanctuary, whom he supposed to be aiding and abetting; and they not being conscious of any guilt, and therefore not apprehensive of any danger, came all of them to the king, ver. 11, and none of them attempted to make an escape, or to flee to David for shelter, as they would have done now he had set up his standard, if they had been as much in his interest as Saul suspected they were. Saul arraigns him himself with the utmost disdain and indignation, ver. 12. Hear now, thou son of Ahitub; not so much as calling him by his name, much less giving him his title of distinction. By this it appears that he had cast off the fear of God, that he shewed no respect at all to his priests, but took a pleasure in affronting them and insulting over them. Ahimelech holds up his hand at the bar in those words *Here I am, my lord*, ready to hear my charge, knowing I have done no wrong. He doth not demur to the jurisdiction of Saul's court, nor insist upon an exemption as a priest, no, not though he were a high-priest, to which office that of the judge, or chief magistrate, had not long since been annexed; but Saul having now the sovereignty vested in him, in things pertaining to the king, even the high priest sets himself on a level with common Israelites; *Let every soul be subject* (even clergymen) *to the higher powers*.

3. His indictment is read to him, ver. 13. That he, as a false traitor, had joined himself with the son of Jesse in a plot to depose and murder the king. His design (saith Saul) was to rise up against me, and thou didst assist him with victuals and arms. See what ill constructions the most innocent actions are liable to; how unsafe they are that live under a tyrannical government, and what reason we have to be thankful for the happy constitution and administration of the government we are under.

4. To this indictment he pleads not guilty, ver. 14, 15. he owns the fact, but denies that he did it traitorously or maliciously, or with any design against the king. He pleads, that he was so far from knowing of any quarrel between Saul and David, that he really took David to have been as much in favour at court as ever he had been. Observe, He doth not plead that David had told him an untruth, and with that had imposed upon him, though really it was so, because he would not proclaim the weakness of so

good a man, no not for his own vindication; especially to Saul, who sought all occasions against him; but he insists upon the settled reputation David had as the most faithful of all the servants of Saul; the honour the king had put upon him in marrying his daughter to him, and the use the king had often made of him, and the trust he had reposed in him, he goes at thy bidding, and is honourable in thy house, and therefore any one would think it a meritorious piece of service to the crown to shew him respect, so far from apprehending it to be a crime. He pleads, that he had been wont to enquire of God for him; when he was sent by Saul upon any expedition, and did it now as innocently as ever he had done it. He protests his abhorrence of the thought of being in a plot against the king, *Be it far from me*, I mind my own business, and meddle not with state matters. He begs the king's favour, *let him not impute any crime to us*; and concludes with a declaration of his innocence, *his servant knew nothing of this*. Could any man plead with more evidences of sincerity? Had he been tried by a jury of honest Israelites, he had certainly been acquitted, for who can find any fault in him? But,

5. Saul himself gives judgment against him, ver. 16. *Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech*, as a rebel, *thou and all thy father's house*. What could be more unjust? *I saw under the sun, the place of judgment, that wickedness was there*, Eccl. iii. 16. 1. It was unjust that Saul should himself alone, give judgment in his own cause without any appeal either to judge or prophet, to his privy counsel, or to a council of war. 2. That so fair a plea should be over-ruled and rejected without any reason given, or any attempt to disprove the allegations of it, but purely with a high hand. 3. That sentence should be passed so hastily and with so much precipitation: the judge taking no time to move in arrest of judgment. 4. That the sentence should be passed not only on Ahimelech himself, who was the only person accused by Doeg, but on all his father's house, against whom nothing was alleged: must the children be put to death for the fathers? 5. That the sentence was pronounced in passion, not for the support of justice, but for the gratification of his brutish rage.

6. He issues out a warrant (a verbal warrant only) for the immediate execution of this bloody sentence.

1. He ordered his footmen to be the executioners of his sentence, but they refused, ver. 17. Hereby he intended to put a farther disgrace upon the priest, they may not die by the hands of his men of war, (as *1 Kings* in. 22.) or his usual ministers of justice, but his footmen must triumph over them, and wash their hands in their blood. 1. Never was the command of a prince more barbarously given. *Turn and slay the priests of the Lord*. This is spoken with such an air of impiety, as can scarce be paralleled. Had he seemed to forget their sacred office and relation to God, and taken no notice of that, it had intimated some regret that men of that character should fall under his displeasure; but to call them the priests of the Lord then, when he ordered his footmen to cut their throats, looked as if upon that very account he hated them. God having rejected him, and ordered another to be anointed in his room, he seems well pleased with this opportunity of being revenged on the priests of the Lord, since God himself was out of his reach. What wickedness will not the evil spirit hurry men to when he gets the dominion; He alleges, in his order that which was *unlawful*, and unproved to him, that they knew when David fled: whereas they knew nothing of the matter. But malice and murder are commonly supported with lies. 2. Never was the command of a prince more honourably disobeyed. The footmen had more sense and grace than their master. Though they might expect to be turned out of their places, if not punished and put to death for their refusal, yet, come on them what would, they would not offer to fall upon the priests of the Lord, such a reverence had they for their office, and such a conviction of their innocence.

2. He ordered Doeg (the accuser) to be the executioner, and he did it. One would have thought that the footmen's refusal should have awakened Saul's conscience, and he should not have insisted upon the doing of a thing so barbarous as that his footmen should be the executioners of it. But his mind was blinded and his heart hardened, and if they will not do it, the hands of the witness shall be upon them, *Deut. xvii. 7*. The most bloody tyrants have found out instruments of their cruelty as barbarous as themselves: Doeg is no sooner commanded to fall upon the priests, but he doth it willingly enough, and meeting with no resistance, slays with his own hand (for ought appears) on that same day eighty-five priests that were of the age of manhood, between twenty and fifty, for they wore a linen ephod, ver. 18, and perhaps appeared at this time before Saul in their habits, and were slain in them. This (one would think) was enough to satiate the most blood-thirsty; but the horseleech of persecution still cries, Give, give. Doeg, by Saul's order, no doubt, having murdered the priests, went to their city Nob, and put all to the sword there, ver. 19. *men, women, and children*, and the cattle too. Barbarous cruelty, and such as one cannot think of without horror? Strange, that ever it should enter into the heart of man to be so impious, so inhuman! We may see in this, 1. The desperate wickedness of Saul when the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him. Nothing so vile, but they may be hurried to it who have provoked God to give them up to their hearts' lusts. He that was so compassionate as to spare Agag and the cattle of the Amalekites, in disobedience to the command of God; could now, with unrelenting bowels see the priests of the Lord murdered, and nothing spared of all that belonged to them. For that sin God left him to these. 2. The accomplishment of those threatenings long since pronounced against the house of Eli, for Ahimelech and his family were descendants from him. Though Saul was unrighteous in doing this, yet God was righteous in permitting it; now God performed against Eli that, at which the ears of them that heard it must tingle, as he had told him that he would judge his house for ever, chap. iii. 11, 12, 13. No word of God shall fall to the ground. 3. This may be considered as a great judgment upon Israel, and the just punishment of their desiring a king before the time God intended them one. How deplorable was the state of religion at this time in Israel! Though the ark had long been in obscurity, yet it was some comfort to them that they had the altar, and priests to serve at it; but now to see their priests weltering in their own blood, and the heirs of the priesthood too, and the city of the priests made a desolation; so that the altar of God must needs be neglected for want of attendants, and this by the unjust and cruel order of their own king to satisfy his brutish rage, this could not but go to the heart of all pious Israelites, and make them with a thousand times they had been satisfied in the government of Samuel and his sons. The worst enemies of their nation could not have done them a greater mischief.

20. ¶ And one of the sons of Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub, named Abiathar, escaped and fled after David. 21. And Abiathar shewed David, that Saul had slain the LORD's priests. 22. And David said unto Abiathar, I knew it that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul: I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house. 23.

Abide

Abide thou with me, fear not; for he that seeketh my life, seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard.

Here is, 1. The escape of Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, out of the desolations of the priests city. Probably, when his father went to appear upon Saul's summons, he was left at home to attend the altar, by which means he escaped the first execution, and before Doeg and his bloodhounds came to Nob he had intelligence of the danger, and had time to shift for his own safety. And whither should he go but to David, ver. 20. They that suffer for the son of David, let them commit the keeping of their souls to him, 1 Pet. iv. 19.

2. David's resentment of the melancholy tidings he brought. He gave David an account of the bloody work Saul had made amongst the priests of the Lord, ver. 21. as the disciples of John, when their master was beheaded went and told Jesus, Matt. xiv. 12. And David greatly lamented the calamity itself, but especially being accessory to it, *I have occasioned the death of all these persons of thy father's house*, ver. 22. Note, It is a great trouble to a good man to find himself any way an occasion of the calamities of the church and ministry. David knew Doeg's character so well, that he feared he would do some such mischief as this, when he saw him at the sanctuary, *I knew he would tell Saul*. He called him Doeg the Edomite, because he retained the heart of an Edomite, though, by embracing the profession of the Jewish religion, he had put on the mask of an Israelite.

3. The protection he granted to Abiathar. He saw him in a mighty fright, as he had reason to be, and therefore bids him not fear, he would be as careful for him as for himself; *with me thou shalt be in safeguard*, ver. 23. David having now time to recollect himself, speaks with assurance of his own safety, and promiseth, that whosoever was his protection, Abiathar should have the benefit of. It is promised to the Son of David, that God will *hide him in the shadow of his hand*, Isa. xlix. 2. and with him all that are his may be sure that *they shall be in safeguard*, Psalm xci. 1. David had now not only a prophet, but a priest, a high priest with him, to whom he was a blessing and they to him, and both a happy omen of his success. Yet it appears, by chap. xxviii. 6. that Saul had a high-priest too, for he had a Urim to consult: it is supposed, he preferred Abitub the father of Zadok, of the family of Eleazar, 1 Chron. vi. 8. for even those that hate the power of godliness, yet will not be without the form. It must not be forgotten here, that David at this time penned the fifty-second Psalm, as appears by the title of that Psalm, wherein he represents Doeg not only as malicious and spiteful, but as false and deceitful; because though what he said was, for the substance of it, true, yet he put false colours upon it, with a design to do mischief: yet even then, when the priesthood was become as a withered branch, he looks upon himself as a *green olive-tree in the house of God*, ver. 8. In this mighty hurry and distraction that David was continually in, yet he found both time and a heart for communication with God, and found comfort in it.

C H A P. XXIII.

Saul having made himself drunk with the blood of the priests of the Lord, is here, in this chapter, seeking David's life, who appears here doing good, and suffering ill at the same time. Here is, 1. The good service he did to his king and country in rescuing the city of Keilah out of the hands of the Philistines, ver. 1—6. 2. The danger he was thereby brought into from the malice of the prince he served and the treachery of the city he saved; and his deliverance, by divine direction, from that danger, ver. 7—13. 3. David in a wood, and his friend Jonathan visiting him there and encouraging him, ver. 14—18. 4. The information which the Ziphites brought to Saul of David's haunts, and the expedition Saul made in pursuit of him, ver. 19—25. 2. The narrow escape David had of falling into his hands, ver. 26—29. Many are the troubles of the righteous but the Lord delivereth them out of them all.

1. **T**HEN they told David, saying, Behold the Philistines fight against Keilah, and they rob the threshing-floors. 2. Therefore David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go and smite these Philistines? And the LORD said unto David, Go, and smite the Philistines, and save Keilah. 3. And David's men said unto him, Behold, we be afraid here in Judah: how much more then if we come to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines? 4. Then David enquired of the LORD yet again: and the LORD answered him, and said, Arise, go down to Keilah: for I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand. 5. So David and his men went to Keilah, and fought with the Philistines, and brought away their cattle, and smote them with a great slaughter: so David saved the inhabitants of Keilah. 6. And it came to pass when Abiathar, the Son of Ahimelech, fled to David to Keilah, that he came down with an ephod in his hand.

Now we find why the prophet Gad (by divine direction, no doubt) ordered David to go into the land of Judah, chap. xxii. 5. that, now Saul neglected the public safety, he might take care of it, notwithstanding the ill treatment that was given him; for he must render good for evil, and therein be a type of him who not only ventured his life, but laid down his life, for them that were his enemies.

1. Tidings are brought to David as to the patron and protector of his country's liberties, that the Philistines had made a descent upon the city of Keilah, and plundered the country thereabouts, ver. 1. Probably it was the departure both of God and David from Saul that encouraged the Philistines to make this incursion. When princes begin to persecute God's people and ministers, let them expect no other, than vexation on all sides. The way for any country to be quiet is, to let God's church be quiet in it: but if Saul fight against David, the Philistines shall fight against his country.

2. David is forward enough to come in for their relief, but is willing to enquire of the Lord concerning it. Here is an instance, (1.) Of David's generosity and public-spiritedness. Though his head and hands were full of his own business, and he had enough to do, with that little force he had, to secure himself, yet he was concerned for the safety of his country, and would not sit still to see that ravaged; nay, though Saul, whose business it was to guard the borders of his land, hated him and sought his life, yet he

was, willing to the utmost of his power, to serve him and his interests against the common enemy, and bravely abhorred the thought of sacrificing the common welfare to his private revenge. Those are unlike to David who fully decline to do good, because they have not been so well considered as they deserved for the services they have done. (2.) Of David's piety and regard to God. He enquired of the Lord by the prophet Gad; for it should seem by ver. 6. that Abiathar came not to him with the ephod till he was in Keilah. His enquiry is, *Shall I go and smite these Philistines?* He enquires both concerning the duty, whether he might lawfully take Saul's work out of his hand, and act without a commission from him; and, concerning the event, whether he might safely venture against such a force as the Philistines had with such a handful of men at his feet, and such a dangerous enemy as Saul was at his back. It is our duty, and will be our ease and comfort, whatever happens, to acknowledge God in all our ways, and to seek direction from him.

3. God appointed him once and again, to go against the Philistines, and promised him success. *Go, and smite the Philistines*, ver. 2. His men opposed it, ver. 3. no sooner did he begin to have soldiers of his own, but he found it hard enough to manage them. They objected, that they had enemies enough among their own countrymen, they needed not make the Philistines their enemies. Their hearts failed them when they only apprehended themselves in danger from Saul's pursuivants, much more when they came to engage the Philistines armies. To satisfy them therefore, he enquired of the Lord again, and now received not only a full commission, which would warrant him to fight, though he had no orders from Saul, *Arise, Go down to Keilah*, with a full assurance of victory; *I will deliver the Philistines into thine hand*, ver. 4. This was enough to animate the greatest coward he had in his regiment.

2. He went accordingly against the Philistines, routed them, and rescued Keilah, ver. 5. and it should seem he made a sally into the country of the Philistines, for he carried off their cattle by way of reprisal for the wrong they did to the men of Keilah, in robbing their threshing-floors. Here notice is taken, ver. 6. that it was while David remained in Keilah, after he had cleared it of the Philistines, that Abiathar came to him with an ephod in his hand, i. e. the high priest's ephod, in which the Urim and Thummim was. It was a great comfort to David, in his banishment, that when he could not go to the house of God, he had some of the choicest treasures of that house brought to him, the high-priest, and his break-plate of judgment.

7. ¶ And it was told Saul that David was come to Keilah; and Saul said, God hath delivered him into mine hand; for he is shut in by entering into a town that hath gates and bars. 8. And Saul called all the people together to war, to go down to Keilah, to besiege David and his men. 9. ¶ And David knew that Saul secretly practised mischief against him; and he said unto Abiathar the priest, Bring hither the ephod. 10. Then said David, O LORD God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah to destroy the city for my sake. 11. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hand? will Saul come down as thy servant hath heard? O LORD God of Israel, I beseech thee tell thy servant. And the LORD said he will come down. 12. Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me and my men into the hand of Saul? and the LORD said, They will deliver thee up. 13. ¶ Then David and his men which were about six hundred, arose, and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go: and it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah: and he forbore to go forth.

Here is, 1. Saul contriving within himself the destruction of David, ver. 7, 8. He heard that he was come to Keilah; and did he not hear what brought him thither? Was it not told him that he bravely relieved Keilah, and delivered it out of the hands of the Philistines? which one would think should have put Saul upon considering, what honour and dignity should be done to David for this? But instead of that, he catches as it is an opportunity of doing himself a mischief. An ungrateful wretch he was, and for ever unworthy to have any service or kindness done him. Well might David complain of his enemies, that they rewarded him *evil for good*, and that for his love they were his adversaries, *Psal. xxxv. 12. cix. 4.* Christ was used thus basely, *John x. 32.* Now observe, 1. How Saul abused the God of Israel, in making his providence to patronize and give countenance to his malicious designs, and from thence promising himself success in them. God hath delivered him into my hand; as if he, who was rejected of God, were in this instance owned and favoured by him, and David infatuated. He vainly triumphs before the victory, forgetting how often he had had fairer advantages against David than he had now, and yet missed his aim: He impiously intitles God to his cause, because he thought he had gained one point. Therefore David prays, (*Psal. cxl. 8.*) *Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked, further not his wicked device, lest they exult themselves.* We must not think one smiling providence, either justifies an unrighteous cause, or secures its success. 2. How Saul abused the Israel of God, in making them the servants of malice against David. He called all the people together to war, and they must with all speed march to Keilah, pretending to oppose the Philistines, but intending to besiege David and his men; concealing that design, for it is said, ver. 9. he *secretly practised mischief against him*. Miserable is that people whose prince is a tyrant, for while some are sufferers by his tyranny, others (which is worse) are made servants to it, and instruments of it.

2. David consulting with God concerning his own preservation. He knew by the informations brought him, that Saul was plotting his ruin, ver. 9. and therefore applies himself to his great protector for direction. No sooner is the ephod brought him, but he makes use of it, *bring hither the ephod*. We have the scriptures, those lively oracles in our hands, let us take advice from them in doubtful cases, bring hither the bible. David's address to God upon this occasion is, 1. Very solemn and reverent. Twice he calls God, the *Lord God of Israel*, and thrice calls himself his servant, ver. 10, 11. Those that address to God must know their distance, and who are they speaking to. 2. Very particular and express. His representation of the case is so, ver. 10. Thy servant hath certainly heard by very good hands (for he would not call for the ephod upon every idle rumour) that Saul has a design upon Keilah; he doth not say to destroy me, but to destroy the city (as he had lately done the city of Nob) for my sake. He seems more solicitous for their safety than for his own, and will expose himself

himself any where, rather than they shall be brought into trouble by his being among them. Generous souls are thus minded. His queries upon the case are likewise very particular. God allows us to be so in our addresses to him; Lord direct me in this matter, about which I am now at a loss. He doth indeed invert the due order of his queries, but God in his answer puts him into a method. That question should have been put first, and was first answered, Will Saul come down as thy servant has heard? Yea, saith the oracle, he will come down; he has resolved it, is preparing for it, and will do it, unless he hear that thou hast quitted the town. Well, but if he do come down will the men of Keilah stand by me in holding the city against him, or will they open him the gates, and deliver me into his hand? If he had asked the men (*i. e.* the magistrates or elders) of Keilah themselves, what they would do in that case, they could not have told him, not knowing their own minds, nor what they should do when it came to the trial, much less which way the major vote of their council would carry it; or they might have told him they would protect him, and yet afterwards have betrayed him, but God could tell him infallibly: When Saul besieged their city, and demands of them that they surrender thee into his hands, how fond forever they now seem of thee, as their saviour, they will deliver thee up, rather than stand the shock of Saul's fury. Note, 1. God knows all men better than they know themselves, knows their length, their strength, what is in them, and what they will do, if they come into such and such circumstances. 2. He therefore knows not only what will be, but what would be, if it were not prevented; and therefore knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and how to render to every man according to his works.

David having thus far notice given him of his danger, quitted Keilah, *ver.* 13. His followers were now increased in number to six hundred, with these he went out, not knowing whither he went, but resolving to follow providence, and put himself under his protection. This broke Saul's measures, he thought God had delivered him into his hand, but it proved God delivered him out of his hand, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler. When Saul heard that David was escaped from Keilah, he forbore to go forth with the body of the army as he intended, *ver.* 8. and resolved to take only his own guards, and go in quest of him. Thus doth God baffle the designs of his peoples enemies, and turn their counsels headlong.

14. And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph: and Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand. 15. ¶ And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: And David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood. 16. And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. 17. And he saith unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee, and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. 18. And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

Here is, 1. David absconding. He abode in a wilderness, in a mountain, *ver.* 14. in a wood, *ver.* 15. We must here, 1. Commend his eminent virtues, his humility, modesty, fidelity to his prince, and patient attendance on the providence of his God, that he did not draw up his forces against Saul, to fight him in the field, or surprise him by some stratagem or other, and so avenge his own quarrel and that of the Lord's priests upon him, and put an end to his own troubles, and the calamities of the country under his tyrannical government: No, he makes no such attempt; keeps God's way, waits God's time, and is content to secure himself in woods and wildernesses, though with some it might seem a reproach to that courage for which he had been famous. But, 2. We must also lament his hard fate, that an innocent man should be thus terrified, and put in fear of his life; that a man of honour should be thus disgraced, a man of merit thus recompensed for his services, and a man that delighted in the service of God and his country, should be debarred from both and wrapt up in obscurity. What shall we say to this? Let it make us think the worse of this world, which often gives such bad treatment to its best men; let it reconcile even great and active men to privacy and restraint, if providence make that their lot, for it was David's; and let it make us long for that kingdom, where goodness shall for ever be in glory, and holiness in honour, and the righteous shall shine as the sun, which cannot be put under a bushel.

2. Saul hunting him as his implacable enemy. He sought him every day, so restless was his malice, *ver.* 14. He sought his life no less; so cruel was his malice, *ver.* 15. As it had been from the beginning, it was now, and will be. *He that is born after the flesh, persecuteth him that is born after the spirit,* Gal. ix. 29.

3. God defending him, as his powerful protector. God delivered him not in his hand as Saul hoped, *ver.* 7. and unless God had delivered him into his hand, he could not prevail against him, *John* xiv. 11.

4. Jonathan comforting him, as his faithful and constant friend. True lovers will find out means to get together; David, it is likely, appointed time and place for this interview, and Jonathan observed it, though he exposed himself by it to his father's displeasure, and, had it been discovered, might have cost him his life. True friendship will not stick at danger, but can easily venture; will not stick at condescension, but can easily stoop, and exchange a palace for a wood to serve a friend. The very sight of Jonathan was reviving to David; but besides that, he said that to him which was very encouraging.

1. As a pious friend he directed him to God the foundation of his confidence, the fountain of his comfort. He strengthened his hand in God. David, though a strong believer, needed the help of his friends for the perfecting of what was lacking in his faith; and therein Jonathan was helpful to him, by minding him of the promise of God, the holy oil wherewith he was anointed the presence of God with him hitherto, and the many experiences he had had of God's goodness to him. Thus he strengthened his hands for action, by encouraging his heart not in the creature but in God, Jonathan was not in a capacity of doing any thing to strengthen him, but he assured him God would.

2. As a self-denying friend, he takes a pleasure in the prospect of David's advancement to that honour, which was his birthright, *ver.* 17. Thou shalt live to be king, and I shall think it preferment enough to be next thee, shall thee, though under thee, and will never pretend to be a rival with thee. This resignation which Jonathan made to David of his title, would

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be a great satisfaction to him, and make his way much the more clear. This he tells him, Saul knew very well. Jonathan having sometimes heard him say as much: Whence it appears, what a wicked man Saul was to persecute one whom God favoured; and what a foolish man he was in thinking to prevent that which God had determined, and which would certainly come to pass. How could he disannul what God had proposed?

3. As a constant friend, he renewed his language of friendship with him; they two made a covenant now, this third time, before the Lord, calling him to witness to it, *ver.* 18. True love takes delight in repeating its engagements, giving and receiving fresh assurances of the firmness of the friendship. Our covenant with God should be often renewed, and therein our communion with him kept up. David and Jonathan now parted, and never came together again that we find, in this world; for Jonathan said what he wished, not what he had ground to expect, when he promised himself, that he should be next David in his kingdom.

19. ¶ Then came up the Ziphites to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of Jeshimon? 20. Now therefore, O king, come down according to all the desire of thy soul to come down, and our part shall be to deliver him into the king's hand. 21. And Saul said, Blessed be ye of the LORD; for ye have compassion on me. 22. Go I pray you, prepare yet, and know and see his place where his haunt is, and who hath seen him there: for it is told me, that he dealeth very subtilly. 23. ¶ See therefore, and take knowledge of all the lurking-places where he hideth himself, and come ye again to me, with the certainty, and I will go with you: and it shall come to pass, if he be in the land, that I will search him out throughout all the thousands of Judah. 24. And they arose, and went to Ziph before Saul: but David and his men were in the wilderness of Maon, in the plain on the south of Jeshimon. 25. Saul also and his men went to seek him; and they told David: wherefore he came down into a rock, and abode in the wilderness of Maon: and when Saul heard that, he pursued after David in the wilderness of Maon. 26. And Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain: and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul: for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them. 27. ¶ But there came a messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee, and come; for the Philistines have invaded the land. 28. Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines; therefore they called that place Sela-Hammahlekoth. 29. ¶ And David went up from thence, and dwelt in strong holds at En-gedi.

Here, 1. The Ziphites offer their service to Saul, to betray David to him, *ver.* 19. 20. He was sheltering himself in the wilderness of Ziph, *ver.* 14, 15. putting the more confidence in the people of that country, because they were of his own tribe: And they had reason to think themselves happy, that they had an opportunity of serving one who was the ornament of their tribe, and was likely to be much more so; that was so far from plundering the country, or giving any disturbance with his troops, that he was ready to protect it, and do them all the good offices that there was occasion for: But to ingratiate themselves with Saul they went to him, and not only informed him very particularly where David quartered, *ver.* 19. but invited him to come with his forces into the country in pursuit of him, and promised to deliver him into his hand, *ver.* 20. Saul had not sent to examine or threaten them, but of their own accord, and even without asking a reward (as Judas did, *what will ye give me?*) they proffer to betray David to him, who they knew thirsted after his blood.

2. Saul thankfully receives their information, and gladly lays hold on the opportunity of hunting David in their wilderness, in hopes to make a prey of him at length. He intimates to them how kindly he took it, *ver.* 21. *Blessed be ye of the Lord* (so near is God to his mouth, though far from his reins) *for ye have compassion on me.* It seems he looked upon himself as a miserable man and an object of pity; his own envy and ill-nature made him so, else he might have been easy, and have needed no man's compassion. He likewise insinuates the little concern that the generality of his people shewed for him: You have compassion on me, which others have not. Saul gives them instructions to search more particularly for his haunts, *ver.* 22. for (saith he) I hear he deals very subtilly, representing him as a man crafty to do him mischief, whereas all his subtilty was to secure himself. It was strange he did not go down with them immediately, but he hoped, by their means, to set his game with more certainty, and thus divine providence gave David time to shift for himself. But the Ziphites had laid their spies upon all the places, where he was likely to be discovered; and therefore Saul might come and catch him, if he were in the land, *ver.* 23. Now he thought himself sure of his prey, and pleased with the thoughts of devouring it.

3. The imminent peril that David was now brought into. Upon intelligence that the Ziphites had betrayed him, he retired from the hill of Hachilah to the wilderness of Maon, *ver.* 24. and at this time he penned the fifty-fourth Psalm, as appears by the title, wherein he calls the Ziphites strangers, though they were Israelites, because they used him barbarously; but he puts himself under the divine protection, *behold, God is my helper,* and then all shall be well. Saul, having got the scent of him, pursued him closely, *ver.* 25. till he came so near him that there was not a mountain between them, *ver.* 26. David and his men on one side of the mountain flying, and Saul and his men on the other side pursuing: David in fear, and Saul in hope; but this mountain was an emblem of the divine providence coming between David and his destroyer, like the pillar of a cloud between the Israelites and the Egyptians; David was concealed by this mountain, and Saul confounded by it: David now flees as a bird to his mountain, Psalm xi. 1. and finds God to him as the shadow of a great rock. Saul hoped with his numerous forces, to inclose David, and compass him in and

his men; but the ground did not prove convenient for his design, and so it failed. A new name was given to the place in remembrance of this, *ver.* 28. Sela-hammahle-koth, the rock of division, because it divided between Saul and David.

4. The deliverance of David out of this danger. Providence gave Saul a diversion, when he was just ready to lay hold on David; notice was brought him that the Philistines were invading the land, *ver.* 27. probably that part of the land where his own estate lay, which would be seized, or at least spoiled, by the invaders: for the little notice he took of Keilah's distress, and David's relief of it in the beginning of this chapter, gives us cause to suspect, that he would not now have left pursuing David and gone to oppose the Philistines, if some private interests of his own had not laid at stake. However it was he found himself under a necessity of going against the Philistines, *ver.* 28. and by this means David was delivered when he was on the brink of destruction; Saul was disappointed of his prey, and God was glorified as his wonderful protector. When the Philistines invaded the land, they were far from intending any kindness to David by it, yet the over-ruling providence of God, which orders all events, and all the times of them, made it very serviceable to him. The wisdom of God is never at a loss for ways and means to preserve his people. As this Saul here was diverted, to another Saul was converted just then when he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the saints of the Lord, Acts ix. 1.

Lastly, David being thus escaped took shelter in some natural fortresses, which he found in the wilderness of En-gedi, *ver.* 29. And this Dr. Lightfoot thinks was the wilderness of Judah, in which David was when he penned the sixty-third Psalm, which breathes as much pious and devout affection as almost any of his Psalms; for in all places, and in all conditions, he still kept up his communion with God.

C H A P. XXIV.

We have hitherto had Saul seeking an opportunity to destroy David, and to his shame he could never find it. In this chapter David had a fair opportunity to destroy Saul, and to his honour he did not make use of it; and his sparing Saul's life was as great an instance of God's grace in him, as the preserving of his own life was of God's providence over him. Observe, 1. How maliciously Saul sought David's life, ver. 1, 2. 2. How generously David saved Saul's life when he had him at advantage, and only cut off the skirt of his robe, ver. 3—8. 3. How pathetically he reasoned with Saul, upon this to bring him to a better temper towards him, ver. 9—15. 4. The good impression this made upon Saul for the present, ver. 16—22.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold David is in the wilderness of En-gedi. 2. Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. 3. And he came to the sheep-cotes by the way, where was a cave, and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. 4. And the men of David said unto him, Behold, the day of which the LORD saith unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand; that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee: Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. 5. And it came to pass afterwards, that David's heart smote him because he had cut off Saul's skirt. 6. And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master the LORD's anointed, to stretch forth thine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD. 7. So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul: but Saul arose up out of the cave, and went on his way. 8. And David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.

Here, 1. Saul renews his pursuit of David, *ver.* 1, 2. No sooner is he come home safe from chasing the Philistines in which it should seem he had good success, but he enquires after David to do him a mischief, and resolves to have another pull at him, as if he had been delivered to do all these abominations, Jer. vii. 10. By the frequent incursions of the Philistines, he might have seen how necessary it was to recal David from his banishment, and to restore him to his place in the army again; but so far is he from that, that now more than ever he is exasperated against him: and hearing that he is in the wilderness of En-gedi, he draws out three thousand choice men, and goes with them at his feet in pursuit of him, upon the rocks of the wild-goats, where one would think David should not be envied an habitation, nor Saul be desirous to disturb him; for what harm could he fear from one who was no better accommodated? But it is not enough to Saul while he is thus cooped up, he cannot be easy while he is alive.

2. Providence brings Saul alone into the same cave wherein David and his men had hid themselves, *ver.* 3. In those countries there were very large caves in the sides of the rocks or mountains, partly natural, but probably much enlarged by art, for the sheltering of sheep from the heat of the sun, hence we read of places where the flocks did rest at noon, Cant. i. 7. and this cave seems to be spoken of as one of the sheep-cotes. In the sides of this cave David and his men remained, perhaps not all his men, the whole six hundred, but only some few of his particular friends, the rest being disposed of in other the like retirements. Saul passing by turned in himself alone, not in search of David, (for supposing him to be an aspiring ambitious man, he thought to find him rather climbing with the wild goats upon the rocks, than retiring with the sheep into a cave) but thither he turned aside to cover his feet, i. e. to sleep a while, it being a cool and quiet place, and very refreshing in the heat of the day: probably he ordered his attendants to march before, reserving only a very few to wait for him at the mouth

of the cave. Some by the covering of the feet, understand the easing of nature, and think that was Saul's errand into the cave; but the former is more probable.

3. David's servants stir him up to kill Saul now he had so fair an opportunity to do it, *ver.* 4. they mind him that this was the day which he had long been looking for, and of which God had spoken to him in general when he was anointed to the kingdom, which should put a period to his troubles, and open the passage to his advancement: Saul now lay at his mercy, and it was easy to imagine how little mercy he should find with Saul, and therefore what little reason he had to shew mercy to him; by all means (say his servants) give him the fatal blow now. See how apt we are to misunderstand, 1. The promises of God. God had assured David he would deliver him from Saul, and his men interpret that as a warrant to destroy Saul. 2. The providences of God; because it was now in his power to kill him, they concluded he might lawfully do it.

4. David cut off the skirt of his robe, but soon repented that he had done that; his heart smote him for it, *ver.* 5. though it did Saul no real hurt, and served David for a proof that it was in his power to have killed him, *ver.* 11: yet because it was an affront to Saul's royal dignity, he wished he had not done it. Note, It is a good thing to have a heart within us, smiting us for sins that seem little; it is a sign that conscience is awake and tender, and will be a means to prevent greater sins.

5. He reasons strongly both with himself, and with his servants, against doing Saul any hurt. 1. He reasons with himself, *ver.* 6. The LORD forbid that I should do this thing. Note, Sin is a thing which it becomes us to startle at, and resist the temptations to, not only with resolution, but with a holy indignation. He considers Saul now not as his enemy, and the only person that stood in his way of preferment, for then he would be induced to hearken to the temptation, but as God's anointed, i. e. the person whom God had appointed to reign as long as he lived, and who as such was under the particular protection of the divine law; and as his master, to whom he was obliged to be faithful. Let servants and subjects learn hence to be dutiful and loyal, whatever hardships are put upon them, 1 Pet. ii. 13. 2. He reasons with his servants. He suffered them not to rise against Saul, *ver.* 7. He would not only not do this ill thing himself, but he would not suffer those about him to do it. Thus did he render good for evil to him, from whom he had received evil for good; and was herein both a type of Christ, who saved his persecutors, and an example to all Christians, not to be overcome of evil, but to overcome evil with good.

6. He follows Saul out of the cave, and though he would not take the opportunity to slay him, yet he wisely took the opportunity if possible to slay his enmity, by convincing him that he was not such a man as he took him for. 1. Even in shewing his head, now he testified that he had an honourable opinion of Saul. He had too much reason to believe that, let him say what he would, Saul would immediately be the death of him, as soon as he saw him, and yet he bravely lays aside that jealousy, and thinks Saul so much a man of sense as to hear his reasoning, when he had so much to say in his own vindication, and such fresh and sensible proofs to give of his own integrity. 2. His behaviour was very respectful, he stooped with his face to the earth and bowed himself, giving honour to whom honour was due, and teaching us to order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters, even to those that have been most injurious to us.

9. ¶ And David, said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou mens words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? 10. Behold, this day thine eyes have seen, how that the LORD had delivered thee to-day into mine hand in the cave, and some bade me kill thee, but mine eye spared thee, and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord, for he is the LORD's anointed. 11. Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in mine hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not; know thou and see, that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee: yet thou huntest my soul to take it. 12. The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. 13. As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked, but mine hand shall not be upon thee. 14. After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea. 15. The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand.

We have here David's warm and pathetic speech to Saul, wherein he endeavours to convince him that he did him a great deal of wrong in persecuting him thus, and to persuade him therefore to be reconciled.

1. He calls him father, *ver.* 11. for he was not only as king, the father of his country, but he was, in particular, his father-in-law. From a father one may expect compassion, and a favourable opinion. For a prince to seek the ruin of any of his good subjects, is as unnatural as for a father to seek the ruin of his own children.

2. He lays the blame of his rage against him upon his evil counsellors; Wherefore hearest thou men's words? *ver.* 9. It is a piece of respect owing to crowned heads, if they do amiss, to charge it upon those about them, who either advised them to it, or should have advised them against it. David had reason enough to think that Saul persecuted him purely from his own envy and malice, yet he decently supposeth that others put him on to do it, and made him believe that David was his enemy, and sought his hurt. Satan, the great accuser of the brethren, has his agent in all places, and particularly in the courts of those princes that encourage them and give ear to them, who make it their business to represent the people of God as enemies to Cæsar, and hurtful to kings and princes, that being thus dressed up in bear-skins, they may be baited.

3. He solemnly protests his own innocence, and that he was far from designing any hurt or mischief to Saul. There is neither evil nor transgression in my hand, *ver.* 11. I am not chargeable with any crime, nor conscious of any guilt, and, had I a window in my breast thou mightest through it see the sincerity of my heart in this protestation, I have not sinned against thee, (however I have sinned against God) yet thou huntest my soul, i. e. my life. Perhaps it was about this time that David penned the seventh Psalm concerning the business of Cush the Benjamite, i. e. Saul, as some think, wherein he appeals to God, *ver.* 3, 4, 5. If there be iniquity in mine hands, then let the enemy persecute my soul and take it, and puts in a parenthesis with reference

reference to the story of this chapter, *yea I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy.*

4. He produceth undeniable evidence to prove the fallenness of the suggestion upon which Saul's malice against him was grounded; David was charged with seeking Saul's hurt; *see (saith he) yea, see the skirt of thy robe,* ver. 11. let this be a witness for me; and an unexceptionable witness it is; had that been true which I am accused of, I had now had thy head in my hand, and not the skirt of thy robe, for I could as easily have cut off that as this. To corroborate this evidence he shews him, 1. That God's providence had given him opportunity to do it. *The Lord delivered thee,* very surprisingly, *to-day into mine hand;* whence many a one would have gathered an intimation, that it was the will of God that he should now give the determining blow to him whose neck lay so fair for it. When Saul had but a very small advantage against David, he cried out, *God has delivered him in my hand,* chap. xxiii. 7. and resolved to make the best of that advantage; but David did not so. 2. That his counsellors and those about him had earnestly put him on to do it. *Some bade me kill thee.* He had blamed Saul for hearkening to mens words, and justly; for (saith he) if I had done so, thou hadst not been alive now. 3. That it was upon a good principle that he refused to do it; not because his attendants were at hand, who, it may be, would have revenged his death; no, it was not by the fear of them, but by the fear of God, that he was restrained from it; he is my lord, and the Lord's anointed, whom I ought to protect, and to whom I owe faith and allegiance, and therefore I said I will not touch a hair of his head. Such a happy command he had of himself, that his nature, in the midst of the greatest provocation, was not suffered to rebel against his principles.

5. He declares it his fixed resolution never to be his own avenger. *The Lord avenge me of thee,* i. e. deliver me out of thy hand; but, whatever comes of it, *my hand shall not be upon thee,* ver. 13. and again, ver. 14. for the proverb of the ancients saith, *Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked;* the wisdom of the ancients is transmitted to posterity by their proverbial sayings, many such we receive by tradition from our fathers, and the counsels of common persons are very much directed by this, as the old saying is. Here is one that was in use in David's time, *Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked,* i. e. Mens own iniquity will ruin them at last. So some understand it. Forward furious men will cut their own throats with their own knives. Give them rope enough, and they will hang themselves. In this sense it comes in very fitly as a reason why *his hand shall not be upon him.* 2. Ill men will do ill things: according as mens principles and dispositions are, accordingly will their actions be; and this also suits very well here. If David had been a wicked man, as he was represented, he would have done this wicked thing; but he durst not, because of the fear of God. Or thus, whatever injuries ill men do us, (which we are not to wonder at, he that lies among thorns, must expect to be scratched) yet we must not return them; never render railing: though *wickedness proceedeth from the wicked,* yet let it not therefore proceed from us by way of retaliation. Though the dog bark at the sheep, the sheep doth not bark at the dog. See *Ihu.* xxxiii. 6, 7, 8.

6. He endeavours to convince him that as it was an ill thing, so it was a mean thing, for him to give chase to such an inconsiderable person as David was, ver. 14. *Whom doth the king of Israel pursue with all this care and force; a dead dog; a flea; one flea;* so it is in the Hebrew. It is below so great a king to enter the lists with one that is so unequal a match for him, one of his own servants, bred a poor shepherd, now an exile; neither able nor willing to make any resistance. To conquer him would not be his honour, to attempt it was his disparagement: if Saul would consult his own reputation, he would slight such an enemy, (supposing he were really his enemy) and would think himself in no danger from him. David was so far from aspiring, that he was, in his account as a dead dog; Mephibosheth thus calls himself, *2 Sam. ix. 8.* his humble carriage might work upon Saul, if he had any spark of generosity in him; *Satis est prostrasse leoni.* What credit would it be to Saul to trample upon a dead dog? What pleasure could it be to him to hunt a flea, a single flea? which (as some have observed) if it be sought it is not easily found, if it be found not easily caught; and if it be caught is a poor prize, especially for a prince. *Aquila non captat muscas.* David thinks Saul had no more reason to fear him, than to fear a flea-bite.

7. He once and again appeals to God as the righteous judge, ver. 12. and ver. 15. *The Lord judge between me and thee.* Note, The justice of God is the refuge and comfort of oppressed innocence. If men wrong us, God will right us, at furthest, in the judgment of the great day. With him David leaves his cause, and so rests satisfied, waiting his time to appear for him.

16. ¶ And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, *Is this thy voice, my son David?* and Saul lifted up his voice and wept. 17. And he said to David, *Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.* 18. And thou hast shewed this day, how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. 19. For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good, for that thou hast done unto me this day. 20. And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. 21. Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. 22. And David sware unto Saul; and Saul went home: but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

Here is, 1. Saul's penitent reply to David's speech. It was strange he had patience to hear him out, considering how outrageous he was against him, and how cutting David's discourse was: but God restrained him and his men; and we may suppose Saul struck with amazement at the oddness of the incident, and much more when he found how much he had lain at David's mercy. His heart must have been harder than a stone if this had not affected him.

1. He melted into tears, and we will not suppose them to be counterfeit, but real expressions of his present concern at the sight of his own iniquity, so plainly proved upon him. He speaks as one quite overcome with David's kindness; *Is this thy voice my son David?* And as one that repenteth at the thought of his own folly and ingratitude, he *lift up his voice.*

and wept, ver. 16. Many mourn for their own sins that do not truly repent of them; weep bitterly for them, and yet continue in love and league with them.

2. He ingenuously acknowledges David's integrity, and his own iniquity, ver. 17. *Thou art more righteous than I.* Now God made good to David that word on which he had caused him to hope, that he would *bring forth his righteousness as the light,* Psalm xxxvii. 6. They who take care to keep a good conscience, may leave it to God to secure them the credit of it. This fair confession was enough to prove David innocent, even his enemy himself being judge, but not enough to prove Saul himself a true penitent. He should have said, *Thou art more righteous, and I am wicked;* but the utmost he will own is this, *Thou art more righteous than I.* But men will commonly go no further than this in their confessions; they will own they are not so good as some others are; there are that are better than they, and more righteous. He now owns himself under a mistake concerning David, ver. 18. *Thou hast shewed this day,* that thou art so far from seeking my hurt, *that thou hast dealt well with me.* We are too apt to suspect others to be worse affected towards us than they really are, and then perhaps they are proved to be: and when afterwards our mistake is discovered, we should be forward to recal our suspicions, as Saul doth here.

3. He prays God to recompense David for this his generous kindness to him. He owns that David's sparing him when he had him in his power, was an uncommon unparalleled instance of tenderness to an enemy; no man would have done the like; and therefore, either because he thought himself not able to give him a full recompense for so great a favour, or because he found himself not inclined to give him any recompence at all, he turns him over to God for his pay; *The Lord reward thee good,* ver. 19. Poor beggars can do no less than pray for their benefactors, and Saul did no more.

4. He prophesies his advancement to the throne, ver. 20. *I know well that thou shalt surely be king.* He knew it before, by the promise Samuel had made him of it, compared with the excellent spirit that appeared in David, which highly aggravated his sin and folly, in persecuting him as he did; he had as much reason to say, concerning David, as David concerning him, *How can I put forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed?* But now he knew it by the interest he found he had in the people, the special providence of God in protecting him, and that generous kindly spirit he had now given a proof of in sparing his enemy. Now he knew it, i. e. now he was in a good mood, he was willing to own that he knew it, and to submit to the conviction of it. Note, Sooner or later God will force even those that are of the synagogue of Satan, to know and own those that he has loved, and to worship before their feet: for so it is promised, *Rev. iii. 9.* This acknowledgment which Saul made of David's incontestible title to the crown, was a great encouragement to David himself and a support to his faith and hope.

5. He binds David with an oath hereafter to shew the same tenderness of his seed, and of his name, as he had now shewed of his person, ver. 21. David had more reason to oblige Saul by an oath that he would not destroy him, yet he insists not on that, if the law of justice and honour would not bind him, an oath would not; but Saul knew David to be a conscientious man, and would think his interests safe, if he could get them secured by his oath. Saul by his disobedience had ruined his own soul, and never took care by repentance to prevent that ruin, and yet is very solicitous that his name might not be destroyed, nor his seed cut off. However, *David sware unto him,* ver. 22. Though he might be tempted not only in revenge, but in prudence, to extirpate Saul's family, yet he binds himself not to do it, knowing that God could and would establish the kingdom to him and his, without the use of such bloody methods. This oath he afterwards religiously observed, he supported Mephibosheth, and executed those as traitors that slew Ishbosheth. The hanging up of several of Saul's posterity, to atone for the destruction of the Gibeonites, was God's appointment, not David's act, and therefore not the violation of this oath.

2. Their parting in peace. 1. Saul for the present let fall the persecution: he went home convinced, but not converted; ashamed of his envy to David, yet retaining in his breast that root of bitterness; vexed that when at last he had found David, he could not at that time find in his heart to destroy him as he had designed. God has many ways to tie the hands of persecutors, when he doth not turn their hearts. 2. David continued to shift for his own safety: he knew Saul too well to trust him, and therefore *gat him up into the hold.* It is dangerous venturing upon the mercy of a reconciled enemy. We read of those who believed in Christ, and yet he *did not commit himself to them, because he knew all men.* They that like David are innocent as doves, must thus like him be *wise as serpents.*

C H A P. XXV.

We have here some intermission of David's trouble by Saul. Providence favoured him with a breathing time, and yet this chapter gives us instances of the troubles of David; if one vexation seem to be over, we must not be secure; a storm may arise from some other point, as here to David. 1. Tidings of the death of Samuel could not but trouble him, ver. 1. But, 2. The abuse he received from Nabal is more largely recorded in this chapter. (1.) The character of Nabal, ver. 2, 3. (2.) The humble request sent to him, ver. 4—9. (3.) His churlish answer, ver. 10—12. (4.) David's angry resentment of it, ver. 13, 21, 22. (5.) Abigail's prudent care to prevent the mischief it was likely to bring upon her family, ver. 14—20. (6.) Her address to David to pacify him, ver. 23—31. (7.) David's favourable reception of her, ver. 32—35. (8.) The death of Nabal, ver. 36—38. (9.) Abigail's marriage to David, ver. 39—44.

1. **A**ND Samuel died, and all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented him, and buried him in his house at Ramah. And David arose, and went down to the wilderness of Paran.

We have here a short account of Samuel's death and burial.

1. Though he was a great man, and one that was admirably well qualified for public service, yet he spent the latter end of his days in retirement and obscurity: not because he was superannuated, for he knew how to provide in a college of the prophets, chap. xix. 20. but because Israel had rejected him, for which God had justly chastised them; and because his desire was to be quiet, and to enjoy himself and his God in the acts of devotion, now in advanced years, and in this desire God graciously indulged him. Let old people be willing to rest themselves, though it look like burying themselves alive.

2. Though he was a fast friend to David, for which Saul hated him, as also for dealing plainly with them, yet he died in peace, even in the worst

of the days of Saul's tyranny, who he sometimes feared would kill him, chap. xvi. 2. Though Saul loved him not, yet he feared him, as Herod did John, and feared the people, for all knew him to be a prophet. Thus is Saul restrained from hurting him.

3. All Israel lamented him; and they had reason, for they had all a loss of him. His personal merits commanded this honour to be done him at his death: his former services to the public, while he judged Israel, made this respect to his name and memory a just debt; it had been very ungrateful to have withheld it. The sons of the prophets had lost the founder and president of their college, and whatever weakened them was a public loss: but that was not all, Samuel was a constant intercessor for Israel, prayed daily for them, chap. xii. 23. if he go, they part with the best friend, they have. The loss is the more grievous at this juncture, when Saul is grown so outrageous, and David driven his country, never more need of Samuel then now, yet now he is removed. We will hope the Israelites lamented Samuel's death the more bitterly, because they remembered against themselves their own sin and folly in rejecting him, and desiring a king. Note, 1. Those have hard hearts that can bury their faithful ministers with dry eyes; that are not sensible of the loss of those that have prayed for them, and taught them the way of the Lord. 2. When God's providence removes our relations and friends from us, we ought to be humbled for our miscarriages towards them, while they were with us.

4. They buried him, not in the school of the prophets at Nain, but in his own house (or perhaps in the garden pertaining to it) at Ramah, where he was born.

5. David hereupon went down to the wilderness of Paran, retiring perhaps to mourn the more solemnly for the death of Samuel. Or rather because now he had lost so good a friend, who was (and he hoped would be) a great support to him, he apprehended his danger to be greater than ever, and therefore withdrew to a wilderness, out of the limits of the land of Israel; and now it was, that he dwelt in the tents of Kedar, Psal. cxx. 5. In some parts of this wilderness of Paran, Israel wandered when they came out of Egypt: the place would bring to mind God's care concerning them, and David might improve that for his own encouragement, now in his wilderness state.

2. And there was a man in Maon; whose possessions were in Carmel, and the man was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel. 3. Now the name of the man was Nabal, and the name of his wife Abigail: and she was a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man was churlish, and evil in his doings, and he was of the house of Caleb. 4. ¶ And David heard in the wilderness, that Nabal did shear his sheep. 5. And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name: 6. And thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. 7. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not neither was there ought missing unto them all the while they were in Carmel. 8. Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee: wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: (for we come in a good day) give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. 9. And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased. 10. ¶ And Nabal answered David's servants and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? There be many servants now a-days, that break away every man from his master. 11. Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men whom I know not whence they be?

Here begins the story of Nabal.

1. A short account of him, who and what he was, ver. 2, 3. A man we should never have heard of, if there had not happened some communication between him and David. Observe, 1. His name; Nabal. A fool: So it signifies. It was wonder his parents would give him that name, and an ill omen of what proved to be his character: Yet indeed we all of us deserve to be so called, when we come into the world, for *Man is born like the wild asses colt, and foolishness is bound up in our hearts.* 2. His family. He was of the house of Caleb, but was indeed of another spirit from him. He inherited Caleb's estate: for Maon and Carmel lay near Hebron, which was given to Caleb, Josh. xv. 54, 55.—xiv. 14. but he was far from inheriting his virtues. He was a disgrace to his family, and then it was no honour to him. *Degenerant genus opprobrium.* The Seventy and some other versions, read it appellatively, not that he was a Calebite, but he was a dogged man, of a curdish disposition, surly and snappish, and always snarling. He was αἰσχρογῶνος, a man that was a cynic. 3. His wealth. He was very great, i. e. very rich; for riches make men look great in the eye of the world, otherwise to one that takes his measures aright, he really looked very mean. Riches are common blessings, which God often gives to Nabal, to whom he gives neither wisdom nor grace. 4. His wife Abigail: A woman of great understanding. Her name signifies the joy of her father; yet he could not promise himself much joy of her, when he married her to such a husband, enquiring more after his wealth than after his wisdom. Many a child is thrown away upon a great heap of the muck of worldly wealth; married to that, and to nothing else that is desirable. Wisdom is good with an inheritance, but an inheritance is good for little without wisdom. Many an Abigail is tied to a Nabal, and if it be so, be her understanding like Abigail's never so great, it will be little enough for her exercises. 5. His character. He had no sense either of honour or honesty: not of honour, for he was churlish, cross, and ill-humoured; not of honesty, for he was evil in his doings, hard and oppressive, and a man that cared not

what fraud and violence he used in getting and saving, so he could but get and save. This is the character given of Nabal by him, who knows what every man is.

2. David's humble request to him, that he would send him some victuals for himself and his men.

(1.) It seems David was in such distress, that he would be glad to be beholden to him, and did in effect come a begging to his door: What little reason have we to value the wealth of this world, when so great a lot as Nabal was abounds, and so great a saint as David was suffers want? Once before we had David begging his bread, but then it was of Ahimelech the high-priest, to whom one would not grudge to stoop. But to send a begging to Nabal, was what such a spirit as David had, could not admit without some reluctance; yet if providence bring him to those straits, he will not say that to beg he is ashamed. Yet see Psalm xxxvii. 25.

(2.) He chose a good time to send to Nabal, when he had many hands employed about him in shearing his sheep, for whom he was to make a plentiful entertainment, so that good cheer was stirring. Had he sent at another time, Nabal would have pretended he had nothing to spare, but now he could not have that excuse. It was usual to make feasts at their sheep-shearings, as appears by Absalom's feast on that occasion, 2 Sam. xiii. 24. for wool was one of the staple commodities of Canaan.

(3.) David ordered his men to deliver their message to him with a great deal of courtesy and respect. *Go to Nabal, and greet him in my name.* Tell him I sent you to present my service to him, and enquire how he doth and his family, ver. 5. He puts words in their mouths, ver. 6. *Thus shall he say to him that liveth,* (our translators add, in prosperity) as if those live indeed, that live as Nabal did with abundance of the wealth of this world about them, whereas in truth, those that live in pleasure are dead while they live, 1 Tim. v. 6. This was methinks, too high a compliment to pass upon Nabal, to call him the man that liveth. David knew better things, that in God's favour is life; not in the world's smiles: and by the rough answer he was well enough served, for this too smooth address to such a muck-worm. Yet his good wishes were very commendable. *Peace be to thee,* all good both to soul and body, *Peace to thy house, and to all that thou hast.* Tell him I am a hearty well-wisher to his health and prosperity. He bids them call him his son David, ver. 8. intimating, that for his age and estate, David honoured him as a father, and therefore hoped to receive some fatherly kindness from him.

(4.) He pleaded the kindness which Nabal's shepherds had received from David and his men; and one good turn requires another. He appeals to Nabal's own servants, and shews that when David's soldiers were quartered among Nabal's shepherds, (2.) They did not hurt them themselves, did them no injury, gave them no disturbance, were not a terror to them, nor took any of the lambs out of their flock: And considering the character of David's men, men in distress, and debt, and discontented, and the scarcity of provisions in his camp, it was not without a great deal of care and good management that they were kept from plundering. (2.) They protected them from being hurt by others. David himself doth but intimate this, for he would not boast of his good offices, there was nothing missing to them, ver. 7. But Nabal's servants to whom he appealed went further, ver. 16. *They were a wall unto us, both by night and day.* David's soldiers were a guard to Nabal's shepherds, when the hands of the Philistines robbed the threshing floors, chap. xxiii. 1. and would have robbed the sheep-folds: From those rapparees Nabal's flocks were protected by David's care, and therefore let me find favour in thine eyes. Those that have shewn kindness may justly expect to receive kindness.

(5.) He was very modest in his request. Though David was anointed king he insisted not upon royal dainties, but give whatsoever comes to thy hand, and he will be thankful for it: Beggars must not be choosers. They that deserved to have been served first, will now be glad of what is left. They plead we come in a good day, a festival, when not only the provision is more plentiful, but the heart and hand uses to be more open and free than another time. When much may be spared, and yet not be missed. He demands it not as a debt, either by way of tribute, as he was a king, or by way of contribution, as he was a general, but as a boon to a friend, that was his humble servant. David's servants delivered their message faithfully, and very handsomely, not doubting but to go back well laden with provisions.

3. Nabal's churlish answer to this modest petition, ver. 10, 11, one could not have imagined it possible, that any man should be so very rude and ill-conditioned as Nabal was. David called himself his son, and asked bread, and a fish, but instead thereof he gave him a stone and a scorpion; not only denied him, but abused him. If he had not thought fit to send him any supplies for fear of Ahimelech's fate, who paid dear for his kindness to David; yet he might have given a civil answer, and made the denial as modest as the request was; But instead of that he falls into a passion, as covetous men used to do when they are asked for any thing, thinking thus to cover one sin with another, and by abusing the poor to excuse themselves from relieving them: But God will not thus be mocked.

1. He speaks scornfully of David as a sorry fellow not worth taking notice of. The Philistines could say of him, *This is David the king of the land that slew his ten thousands,* chap. xxi. 11. yet Nabal his near neighbour, and one of the same tribe, takes on him, he doth not know him, or not know him to be a man of any merit or distinction; who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? He could not be ignorant how much the country was obliged to David for his public services, but his narrow soul thinks not of paying any part of that debt, not so much as acknowledging, but speaks of David as an inconsiderable man, obscure, and not to be regarded. Think it not strange, if great men and great merits be thus disgraced.

2. He upbraids him with his present distress, and takes occasion from it to represent him as an ill man, that was fitter to be set in the stocks for a vagrant than to have any kindness shewn him. How naturally doth he speak the churlish clownish language of those that hate to give alms: *There be many servants now a-days* (as if there had been none such in former days) *break every man from his master,* suggesting that David was one of them himself, he might have kept his place with his master Saul, and then he needed not have sent to me for provisions: Also that he entertained and harboured those that were fugitives like himself. It would make one's blood rise to hear so great and good man as David was thus villified and reproached by such a base churl as Nabal was. *But the vile person will speak villany,* Isa. xxxiii. 56, 6, 7. If men bring themselves in straits by their own folly, yet they are to be pitied and helped, and not trampled upon and starved: But David is reduced to this distress, not by any fault, no, nor any indiscretion of his own, and purely by the good services he had done to his country, and the honours which God had put upon him, and yet he is represented as a fugitive and runagate. Let this help us to bear such reproaches and misrepresentations of us with patience and cheerfulness, and make us easy under them, that it has often been the lot of the excellent ones of the earth. Some of the best men that ever the world was blest with, was counted as the off-scouring of all things, 1 Cor. iv. 13.

3. He insists much upon the property he had in the provisions of his table, and will by no means admit any body to share in them. It is my bread and my flesh, aye, and my water too (though it is *usus communis aquarum*) and it is prepared for shearers, priding himself in it, that it was all his own; and who denied it? Who offered to dispute his title? but this he thinks will justify him in keeping it all to himself, and giving David none; for may he not do what he will with his own? Whereas we may mistake, if we think we are absolute lords of what we have, and may do what we please with it: No, we are but stewards, and must use it as we are directed, remembering it is not our own, but his that intrusted us with it. Riches are the *αλλότριον* (*Luke xvi. 12*) they are another's, and we ought not to talk too much of their being our own.

12. So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings, 13. And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword: and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men, and two hundred abode by the stuff. 14. ¶ But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and he railed on them. 15. But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields. 16. They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them, keeping the sheep. 17. Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household; for he *is* such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.

Here is, 1. The report made to David of the abuse Nabal had given to his messengers, *ver. 12.* They turned their way, they shewed their displeasure as became them to do, by breaking off abruptly from such a churl, but prudently governed themselves so well, as not to render railing for railing, not to call him as he deserved, much less to take by force what ought of right to have been given them, but came and told David, let him do as he thought fit. Christ's servants when they are thus abused, must leave it to him to plead his own cause, and wait till he appear in it. The servant shewed his lord what affronts he had received, but did not return them, *Luke xiv. 21.*

2. David's hasty resolution hereupon. He girded on his sword, and ordered his men to do so too, to the number of four hundred, *ver. 13.* And what he said we are told, *ver. 21, 22.* (1.) He repented the kindness he had done to Nabal, and looks upon it as thrown away upon him: He said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow has in the wilderness. I thought to have obliged him, and made him my friend, but I see it is to no purpose: He has no sense of gratitude, nor is he capable of receiving the impressions of a good turn, else he could not have used me thus. He hath requited me evil for good: But when we are thus requited, we should not repent of the good we have done, nor be backward to do good another time. God is kind to the evil, and unthankful, and why may not we? (2.) He determined to destroy Nabal, and all that belonged to him, *ver. 22.* Here David did not act like himself: His resolution was bloody, to cut off all the males of Nabal's house, and spare none, man or man-child. The ratification of his resolution was passionate; So, and more also do God, (he was going to say to me, but that would better become Saul's mouth, (*chap. xiv. 44*) than David's and therefore he decently turns it off) to the enemies of David. Is this thy voice, O David? Can the man after God's own heart speak thus unadvisedly with his lips? Has he been so long in the school of affliction, where he should have learned patience, and yet so passionate? Is this he that used to be dumb and deaf when he was reproached, *Psal. xxxviii. 13.* that but the other day spared him who sought his life, and yet now will not spare any thing that belongs to him who had only put an affront upon his messengers? He that at other times used to be calm and considerate, is now put into such a heat by a few hard words, that nothing will atone for them but the blood of a whole family. Lord, what is man! what are the best of men, when God leaves them to themselves, to try them, that they may know what is in their heart? From Saul David expected injuries, and against those he was prepared, and stood upon his guard, and so kept his temper; but from Nabal he expected kindness, and therefore the affront he gave him was a surprise to him, found him off his guard; and by a sudden and unexpected attack put him for the present into disorder. What need have we to pray, *Lord lead us not into temptation?*

3. The account given of this matter to Abigail, by one of the servants, who was more considerate than the rest, *ver. 14.* Had this servant spoken to Nabal, and shewed him the danger he had exposed himself to by his own rudeness, he would have said, servants are now a-days so saucy, and so apt to prescribe, that there is no enduring them, and, it may be, would have turned him out of doors: But Abigail, being a woman of good understanding, took cognizance of the matter, even from her servant, who (1.) Did David right, in commending him and his men for their civility to Nabal's shepherds, *ver. 15, 16.* The men were very good to us, and though they were themselves exposed, yet they protected us, and were a wall unto us. They who do that which is good, one way or other, shall have the praise of the same. Nabal's own servant will be a witness for David, that he is a man of honour and conscience, whatever Nabal himself saith of him. And, (2.) He did Nabal no wrong, in condemning him for his rudeness to David's messengers. He railed on them, *ver. 13.* He flew upon them, so the word is, with an intolerable rage: For, say they, it is his usual practice, *ver. 17.* He is such a son of Belial, so very morose and untractable, that a man cannot speak to him, but he flies into a passion immediately. Abigail knew it too well herself. 3. He did Abigail and the whole family a kindness, in making her sensible what was likely to be the consequence: He knew David so well, that he had reason to think that he would highly resent the affront, and, perhaps, had information of David's orders to his men to march this way, for he is very positive *evil is determined against our master, and all his household*; himself among the rest, would be involved in it. Therefore he desires his mistress to consider what was to be done for their common safety. They could not resist the force David would bring down upon them, nor had they time to send to Saul to protect them, something therefore must be done to pacify David.

XLV.

18. ¶ Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses. 19. And she said unto her servants, Go on before me, Behold, I come after you: but she told not her husband Nabal. 20. And it was so, as she rode on the ass, that she came down by the covert of the hill, and behold, David and his men came down against her, and she met them. 21. (Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. 22. So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him, by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.) 23. And when Abigail saw David, she hastened, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground. 24. And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me, let this iniquity be, and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. 25. Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial; even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send. 26. Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal. 27. And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord. 28. I pray thee, forgive the trespasses of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house: because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days. 29. Yet a man is risen to pursue thee, and to seek thy soul; but the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the LORD thy God; and the souls of thine enemies, them shall he sling out, as out of the middle of a sling. 30. And it shall come to pass, when the LORD shall have done to my lord according to all the good that he hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; 31. That this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself; but when the LORD shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid.

We have here an account of Abigail's prudent management for the preserving her husband and family from the destruction that was just coming upon them; And we find, that she did her part admirably well, and fully answered her character. The passion of souls often makes these breaches in a little time, which the wife, with all their wisdom, have much ado to make up again. It is hard to say, whether Abigail was more miserable in such a husband, or Nabal happy in such a wife. A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband, to protect as well as adorn, and will do him good, and not evil. Wisdom in such a case as this, was better than weapons of war. 1. It was her wisdom, what she did to do it quickly, and without delay, she made haste, *ver. 18.* It was no time to trifle or linger, when all was in danger. They that desire conditions of peace must send when the enemy is yet a great way off, *Luke xiv. 32.* 2. It was her wisdom what she did to do it herself, because, being a woman of great conduct and very happy address, she knew better how to manage it than any servant she had. The virtuous woman will herself look well to the ways of her household, and not devolve it wholly upon others.

Abigail must endeavour to atone for Nabal's faults: now he had been two ways rude to David's messengers, and in them to David. 1. He had denied them the provisions they asked for. 2. He had given them a parcel of foul words and a deal of provoking language. Now,

1. By a most generous present, Abigail atones for his denial of their request. If Nabal had given them what came next to hand, they had gone away thankful; but Abigail prepares the very best the house afforded, and abundance of it, (*ver. 18.*) according to the usual entertainments of those times: Not only bread and flesh, but raisins and figs, which were their dried sweet-meats: Nabal grudged them water, but she took two bottles (casks or runlets) of wine, loaded her asses with these provisions, and sent them before; for a gift pacifieth anger, *Prov. xxi. 14.* Jacob thus pacified Esau. When the instruments of the churl are evil, the liberal deviseth liberal things, and loseth nothing by it; for by liberal things shall he stand, *Isa. xxxii. 7, 8.* Abigail not only lawfully, but laudably disposed of all these goods of her husband's without his knowledge; and when she had reason to think, if she had known he would not have consented to it, because it was not to gratify her own pride, or vanity, but for the necessary defence of him and his family, which otherwise had been inevitably ruined. Husbands and wives, for their common good and benefit, have a joint interest in their worldly possessions, but if either waste or unduly spend any way, it is a robbing of the other.

2. By a most obliging carriage and charming speech she atones for the abusive language which Nabal had given them. She met David upon the march, big with resentment, and in the mind he was in, meditating the destruction of Nabal, *ver. 10.* but with all possible expressions of complaisance and respect she humbly begs his favour, and solicits him to pass by the offence. Her carriage was very submissive; she bowed herself to the ground before David, *ver. 33.* and fell at his feet, *ver. 24.* Yielding paci-

fieth great offences. She puts herself into the place and posture of a penitent, and of a petitioner, and was not ashamed to do it, when it was for the good of her house, in the sight both of her own servants and of David's soldiers. She humbly begs of David, that he will give her the hearing; *let th handmaid speak in thy audience*: But she needed not thus bespeak his attention and patience, what she said was sufficient to command it; for certainly nothing could be more fine, nor more moving. No topic of argument is left untouched, every thing is well placed and well expressed, most pertinently and pathetically urged and improved to the best advantage, with such a force of natural rhetoric as cannot easily be paralleled.

1. She speaks to him all along with the deference and respect that was due to so great and good a man, calls him my lord, over and over, to expiate her husband's crime in saying, who is David? She doth not upbraid him with the heat of his passion, though he deserved to be reproved for it; nor doth she tell him how ill it became his character; but endeavours to sweeten him and bring him to a better temper; not doubting but that then his own conscience would upbraid him with it.

She takes the blame of the ill treatment of his messengers upon herself; *upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be*, ver. 24. If thou wilt be angry, be angry with me, rather than with my poor husband, and look upon it as *the trespass of thine handmaid*, ver. 28. Sordid spirits care not how much others suffer for their faults, while generous spirits can be content to suffer for the faults of others. Abigail here discovered the sincerity and strength of her conjugal affection, and concern for her family; whatever Nabal was, he was her husband.

3. She excuses her husband's fault by impugning it to his natural weakness and want of understanding, ver. 25. *Let not my lord* take notice of his rudeness and ill manners, for it is like him; it is not the first time that he has carried himself so ill-favouredly, he must be borne with, for it is for want of wit; *Nabal is his name*, (which signifies a fool) *and folly is with him*. It was owing to his folly, not his malice; He is simple, but not spiteful. Forgive him, for he knows not what he doth. What she said was too true, and she said it to excuse his fault and prevent his ruin, else she had not done well to give such an ill character as this of her own husband, whom she ought to make the best of, and not to speak ill of.

4. She pleads her own ignorance of the matter. *I knew not the young men*, else they should have had a better answer, and should not have gone without their errand; intimating hereby, that though her husband was foolish and unfit to manage his affairs himself, yet he had so much wisdom as to be ruled by her, and take her advice.

5. She takes it for granted that she had gained her point already, perhaps perceiving, by David's countenance, that he began to change his mind, ver. 26. *Seeing the Lord hath withholden thee*. She depends not upon her own reasonings, but God's grace to mollify him, and doubts not but that grace would work powerfully upon him, and then *let all thine enemies be as Nabal*, i. e. If thou forbear to avenge thyself, no doubt, God will avenge thee on him, as he will on all other thine enemies. Or it intimates that it was below him to take vengeance on so weak and impotent an enemy as Nabal was, who, as he would do him no kindness, so he could do him no hurt, for he needed with no more concerning his enemies, than that they might be as unable to resist him as Nabal was. Perhaps she refers to his sparing of Saul, when but the other day he had him at his mercy; didst thou forbear to avenge thyself on that lion that would devour thee, and wilt thou shed the blood of this dog, that can but bark at thee? The very mentioning of what he was about to do, to shed blood, and to avenge himself, was enough to work upon such a tender gracious spirit as David had; and it should seem by his reply, ver. 33. it affected him.

6. She makes a tender of the present she had brought, but speaks of it as unworthy of David's acceptance; and therefore desires it might be given to the *young men that followed him*, ver. 27. and particularly to those ten that were his messengers to Nabal, whom he had treated so rudely.

7. She applauds David for the good services he had done against the common enemies of his country, the glory of which great achievements she hoped he would not stain by any personal revenges. *My lord fighteth the battles of the Lord* against the Philistines, and therefore he will leave it to God to fight his battles against those that affront him, ver. 28. *Evil has not been found in thee all thy days*: Thou never yet didst wrong to any of thy countrymen, (though persecuted as a traitor) and therefore thou wilt not begin now, nor do a thing which Saul will improve for the justifying of his malice against thee.

8. She foretels the glorious issue of his present troubles. It is true, *Saul pursues thee, and seeks thy life*, (she names him not out of respect to his present character as king) but thou needest not look with so sharp and jealous an eye upon every one that affronts thee; for all these storms, that now ruffle thee, will be blown over shortly. She speaks it with assurance, (1.) That God would keep him safe. *The soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God*, i. e. God shall hold thy soul in life, as the expression is, *Psalms lvi. 9*. as we hold those things tight which are bundled up, or which are precious to us, *Psalms cxvi. 15*. Shall be *treasured up in the treasures of lives*; so the Chaldee, under lock and key as our treasure is; thou shalt abide under the special protection of the divine providence. *The bundle of life is with the Lord our God*, for in his hand our breath is, and our times; Those are safe, and may be easy, that have him for their protector. The Jews understand this, not only of the life that now is, but of that which is to come, even the happiness of separate souls, and therefore use it commonly as an inscription on their grave-stones; Here we have laid the body, but trusting, that *the soul is bound up in the bundle of life, with the Lord our God*: There it is safe, while the dust of the body is scattered. 2. That God would make him victorious over their enemies. Their souls he shall *fling out*, ver. 29. The stone is bound up in the sling, but it is in order to be thrown out again; so the souls of the godly shall be bundled as corn for the barn, but the souls of the wicked as tares for the fire. 3. That God would settle him in wealth and power, *the Lord will certainly make my lord a jure house*, and no enemy thou hast can hinder it; therefore *forgive this trespass*, i. e. shew mercy, as thou hopest to find mercy. God will make thee great, and it is the glory of great men to pass by offences.

9. She desires him to consider how much more comfortable it would be to him in the reflection, to have forgiven this affront than to have revenged it, ver. 30, 31. She reserves this argument for the last, as a very powerful one with so good a man; That the less he indulged his passion, the more he consulted his peace and the repose of his own conscience, which every wife man will be tender of. 1. She cannot but think, that if he should avenge himself, it would afterwards be a grief, and an offence of heart to him. Many have done that in a heat, which they have a thousand times wished undone again. The sweetnets of revenge is soon turned into bitterness. 2. She is confident that if he pass by the offence, it will afterwards be no grief to him; but, on the contrary, it would yield him unspeakable satisfaction that his wisdom and grace had got the better of his passion. Note, When we are tempted to sin, we should consider how it will appear in the reflection. Let us never do any thing for which our own consciences will after-

wards have occasion to upbraid us, and which we shall look back upon with regret. *My heart shall not reprove me*.

Lastly, she commends herself to his favour; *when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid*. As one that kept thee from doing that which would have disgraced thine honour and disquieted thy conscience, and would have made but an ill figure in thine history. We have reason to remember those with respect and gratitude who have been instrumental to keep us from sin.

32. ¶ And David said to Abigail, *Blessed be the LORD God of Israel*, which sent thee this day to meet me. 33. And *blessed be thy advice*, and *blessed be thou*, which hast kept me this day from coming to *shed blood*, and from avenging myself with mine own hand. 34. For in very deed, as the LORD God of Israel liveth, which hath kept me back from hurting thee, except thou hadst hastened and come to meet me, surely, there had not been left unto Nabal, by the morning light, any that pissieth against the wall, 35. So David received of her hand *that which she had brought him*, and said unto her, *Go up in peace to thine house*; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wife reprover upon an obedient ear, Prov. xxv. 12. Abigail was a wife reprover of David's passion, and he gave an obedient ear to the reproof, according to his own principle, *Psalms cxli. 5*. *Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness*. Never was such an admonition either better given, or better taken.

1. David gives God thanks for sending him this happy check in a sinful way, ver. 32. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel which sent thee this day to meet me*. Note, 1. God is to be acknowledged in all the kindnesses that our friends do us, either for soul or body. Whoever meets us with counsel, direction, comfort, or seasonable reproof, we must see God sending them. 2. We ought to be very thankful for those happy providences which are means of preventing sin.

2. He gives Abigail thanks for interposing so opportunely between him and the mischief he was about to do. *Blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou*, ver. 33. Most people think it enough if they take a reproof patiently, but we meet with few that will take it thankfully, that will commend those that give it them, and accept it as a favour. Abigail could not rejoice so much, that she had been instrumental to save her husband and family from death, but David rejoiced as much, that she had been instrumental to save him and his men from sin.

3. He seems very apprehensive of the great danger he was in, which magnified the mercy of his deliverance. 1. He speaks of the sin as very great. He was coming to shed blood, a sin which, when he was his own man, he had a great horror of, witness his prayer, *Deliver me from blood-guiltiness*; he was coming to *avenge himself with his own hand*, and that is stepping into the throne of God, who hath said, *Vengeance is mine, I will repay*. The more heinous any sin is, the greater mercy it is to be kept from it. He seems to aggravate the evil of his design with this, that it would have been an injury to so wife and good a woman as Abigail; God has *kept me back from hurting thee*, ver. 34. Or perhaps at the first sight of Abigail, he was conscious of a thought to do her a mischief for offering to oppose him: and therefore reckons it a great mercy that God gave him patience to hear her speak. 2. He speaks of the danger of his falling into it as very imminent, *except thou hadst hastened*, the bloody execution had been done. The nearer we were to the commission of sin, the greater was the mercy of a seasonable restraint; *Almost gone*: *Psalms lxxiii. 2*. and yet upheld.

4. He dismissed her with an answer of peace, ver. 35. He doth, in effect, own himself overcome by her eloquence; *I have hearkened to thy voice*, and will not prosecute the intended revenge, for *I have accepted thy person*, am well pleased with thee, and what thou hast said. Note, 1. Wife and good men will hear reason and let that rule them, though it come from those that are every way their inferiors, and though their passions are up, and their spirits provoked. 2. Oaths cannot bind us to that which is sinful. David had solemnly vowed the death of Nabal; he did ill to make such a vow, but he had done worse if he had performed it. 3. A wife and faithful reproof is often better taken, and speeds better than we expected; such is the hold God has of men's consciences. See Prov. xxviii. 23.

36. ¶ And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king: and Nabal's heart *was merry within him*, for he *was* very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, until the morning light. 37. But it came to pass in the morning, when the wine was got out of Nabal, and his wife had told him these things, that his heart died within him, and he became *as a stone*. 38. And it came to pass about ten days *after*, that the LORD smote Nabal, that he died. 39. ¶ And when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, *Blessed be the LORD*, that hath pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and hath kept his servant from evil: for the LORD hath returned the wickedness of Nabal upon his own head. And David sent and communed with Abigail, to take her to him to wife. 40. And when the servants of David were come to Abigail to Carmel, they spake unto her saying, David sent us unto thee, to take thee to him to wife. 41. And she arose and bowed herself on her face to the earth, and said, Behold, *let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my lord*. 42. And Abigail hastened, and arose, and rode upon an ass, with five damfels of hers that went after her: and she went after the messengers of David, and became his wife. 43. David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and they were also both of

of them his wives. 44. ¶ But Saul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Phalti the son of Laish, which was of Gallim.

We are now to attend Nabal's funeral, and Abigail's wedding.

(1.) Nabal's funeral. The apostle speaks of some that were twice dead, Jude 12. we have here Nabal thrice dead, though but just now wonderfully rescued from the sword of David, and delivered from so great a death; for the preservations of wicked men, are but reservations for some further sorer strokes of divine wrath. Here is,

1. Nabal dead drunk, ver. 36. Abigail came home, and it should seem, he had so many people, and so much plenty about him, that he neither missed her, nor the provisions she took to David: but she found him in the midst of his jollity, little thinking how near he was to ruin, by one whom he had foolishly made his enemy. Sinners are often most secure when they are most in danger, and destruction is at the door. Observe, 1. How extravagant he was in the entertainment of his company. *He held a feast like the feast of a king*, so magnificent and abundant, though his guests were but his sheep-shearers. This abundance might have been so, if he had considered what God gave him his estate for, not to look great with, but to do good with. It is very common for those that are most niggardly in any act of piety or charity, to be most profuse in gratifying a vain humour or a base lust. A mite is grudged to God and his poor; but to make a fair shew in the field, gold is lavished out of the bag. If Nabal had not answered his name, he would never have been thus secure and jovial, till he had enquired whether he was safe from David's resentments, but (as Bishop Hall observes) thus foolish are carnal men, that give themselves over to their pleasures, before they have taken any care to make their peace with God. 2. How sottish he was in the indulgence of his own brutish appetite. *He was very drunk*. A sign he was Nabal, a fool, that could not use his plenty, but he must abuse it: could not be pleasant with his friends, but he must make a beast of himself. There is not a surer sign that a man has but a little wisdom, nor a surer way to ruin the little he has, than drinking to excess. Nabal, that never thought he could bestow too little in charity, never thought he could bestow too much in luxury. Abigail finding him in this condition, (and probably those about him little better, when the master of the feast set them so ill an example) she had enough to do to set the disordered house to rights a little, but told Nabal nothing of what she had done with reference to David, nothing of his folly in provoking David, of his danger or of his deliverance, for, being drunk, he was as incapable to hear reason, as he was to speak it. To give good advice to those that are in drink, is to cast pearls before swine: it is better to stay till they are sober.

2. Nabal again dead with melancholy, ver. 37. Next morning, when he was come to himself a little, his wife told him how near to destruction he had brought himself and his family, by his own rudeness; and with what difficulty she had interposed to prevent it; and upon this, *his heart died within him, and he became as a stone*. Some suggest, that the expense of the satisfaction made to David, by the present Abigail brought him, broke his heart: it seems rather, that the apprehension he now had of the danger he had narrowly escaped put him into a consternation, and seized his spirits, so that he could not recover it. He grew sullen, and said little, ashamed of his own folly, put out of countenance by his wife's wisdom. How is he changed! his heart over-night merry with wine, next morning heavy as a stone; so deceitful are carnal pleasures; so transient the laughter of the fool; *the end of that mirth is heaviness*. Drunkards are sometimes sad, when they reflect upon their own folly. Joy in God makes the heart always light. Abigail could never, by her wife reasoning, bring Nabal to repentance, but now, by her faithful reproof, she brings him to despair.

3. Nabal at last dead indeed. *About ten days after*, when he had been kept so long under this pressure and pain, *the Lord smote him that he died*, ver. 38. and it should seem he never held up his head; it is just with God, (saith Bishop Hall) that they who live without grace, should die without comfort; neither can we expect better, while we go on in our sins. Here is no lamentation made for Nabal; he departed without being desired; and every one wished that never greater loss come to the country. David, when he heard the news of his death, *gave God thanks for it*, ver. 39. He blessed God, 1. That he had kept him from killing him; *Blessed be the Lord, who hath kept his servant from evil*. He rejoiceth that Nabal died a natural death, and not by his hand. We should take all occasions to mention and magnify God's goodness to us in keeping us from sin. 2. That he had taken the work into his own hands, and had vindicated David's honour, and not suffered him to go unpunished, who had been abusive to him: hereby his interest would be confirmed, and all would stand in awe of him, as one for whom God fought. 3. That he had thereby encouraged him, and all others, to commit their cause to God, when they are any way injured, with an assurance that, in his own time, he will right them, if they sit still and leave it to him.

(2.) Abigail's wedding. David was so charmed with the beauty of her person, and the uncommon prudence of her conduct and address, that as soon as was convenient, after he heard she was a widow, he sent a courting to her, ver. 39. not doubting, but that she who approved herself so good a wife to so ill an husband as Nabal was, would make him a good wife: and having taken notice of her respect to him, and her confidence of his coming to the throne, 1. He courted by proxy, his affairs, perhaps, not permitting him to come himself. 2. She received the address with great modesty and humility, ver. 41. reckoning herself unworthy of the honour, yet having such a respect for him, that she would gladly be one of the poorest servants in his family, to wash the feet of the other servants. None so fit to be preferred as those that can thus humble themselves. 3. She agreed to the proposal, went with his messengers, took a retinue with her agreeable to her quality, and *she became his wife*, ver. 42. She did not upbraid him with his present distresses, and ask him how he could maintain her, but valued him, (1.) Because she knew he was a very good man. (2.) Because she believed he would, in due time, be a very great man: she married him in faith, not questioning but that, though now he had not a house of his own that he durst bring her to, yet God's promise to him would at length be fulfilled. Thus they who join themselves to Christ must be willing now to suffer with him, believing that hereafter they shall reign with him. Lastly, On this occasion we have some account of David's wives. 1. One that he had lost before he married Abigail; Michal, Saul's daughter, his first, and the wife of his youth, to whom he would have been constant, if she would have been so to him, but Saul had given her to another, ver. 44. in token of his displeasure against him, and disclaiming the relation of a father-in-law to him. 2. Another that he married besides Abigail, ver. 43. and, as should seem, before her, for she is named first, chap. xxvii. 3. David was carried away by the corrupt custom of those times, but from the beginning it was not so, nor is it so now: Messias is come, and the times of reformation, Matt. xix. 4, 5. Perhaps Saul's defrauding David of his only rightful wife was the occasion of his running into this irregularity: for when the knot of conjugal affection is once loosed, it is scarce ever tied fast

again. When David could not keep his first wife, he thought that would excuse him if he did not keep to his second. But we deceive ourselves if we think to make others faults a cloke for our own.

C H A P. XXVI.

David's troubles from Saul here begin again; and the clouds return after the rain, when one would have hoped the storm had blown over, and the sky had cleared upon that side; but after Saul had owned his fault in persecuting David, and David's title to the crown, yet here he revives the persecution, so perfectly lost was he to all sense of honour and virtue. 1. The Ziphites informed him where David was, ver. 1. and thereupon he marches out with a considerable force in quest of him, ver. 2, 3. 2. David gained intelligence of his motions, ver. 4. and took a view of his camp, ver. 5. 3. He and one of his men ventured into his camp in the night, and found him and all his guards fast asleep, ver. 6, 7. 4. David, though much urged to it by his companions, would not take away Saul's life; but only carried off his spear and his cruse of water, ver. 8—12. 5. He produced those as a further witness for him, that he did not design any ill to Saul, and reasoned with him upon it, ver. 13—20. 6. Saul was hereby convinced of his error, and once more let fall the persecution, ver. 21—25. The story is much like that which we had chap. xxiv. In both, David is delivered out of Saul's hand, and Saul out of David's.

1. **A**ND the Ziphites came unto Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon? 2. Then Saul arose, and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, having three thousand chosen men of Israel with him, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph. 3. And Saul pitched in the hill of Hachilah, which is before Jeshimon by the way; but David abode in the wilderness, and he saw that Saul came after him into the wilderness. 4. David therefore sent out spies, and understood that Saul was come in very deed. 5. ¶ And David arose, and came to the place where Saul had pitched; and David beheld the place where Saul lay, and Abner the son of Ner, the captain of his host; and Saul lay in the trench, and the people pitched round about him.

Here, 1. Saul gets information of David's motions, and acts offensively. The Ziphites came to him and told him where David now was; in the same place where he was when they formerly betrayed him, chap. xxiii. 19. Perhaps (though it is not mentioned) Saul had given them intimation underhand that he continued his design against David, and would be glad of their assistance: if not, they were very officious to Saul, suspecting that would please him, and very malicious against David, to whom they despaired of ever reconciling themselves, and therefore they stirred up Saul (who needed no such spur) against him, ver. 1. For ought we know, Saul had continued in the same good mind that he was in, (chap. xxiv. 17.) and would not have given David this fresh trouble, if the Ziphites had not put him on. See what need we have to pray to God, that since we have so much of the tinder of corruption in our own hearts, the sparks of temptation may be kept far from us, lest, if they come together, we be set on fire of hell. Saul readily caught at the discovery, and went down to the place where David hid himself with an army of three thousand men, ver. 2. How soon do un sanctified hearts lose the good impressions which their convictions have made upon them, and return with the dog to the vomit?

2. David gets information of Saul's motions, and acts defensively. He did not march out to meet and fight him; he sought only his own safety, not Saul's ruin; therefore he *abode in the wilderness*, ver. 3. putting thereby a great force upon himself, and curbing the bravery of his own spirit by a silent retirement, shewing more true valour than he could have done by an irregular resistance. 1. He had spies who ascertained him of Saul's descent; *that he was come in very deed*, ver. 4. for he would not believe that Saul would have dealt so basely with him till he had the utmost evidence of it. 2. He made his own eyes his spies to observe how Saul was encamped, ver. 5. He came towards the place where Saul and his men had pitched their tents, so near as to be able, undiscovered, to take a view of their entrenchments, probably, in the dusk of the evening.

6. Then answered David and said to Ahimelech the Hittite, and to Abishai the son of Zeruiah, brother to Joab, saying, Who will go down with me to Saul to the camp? And Abishai said, I will go down with thee. 7. So David and Abishai came to the people by night, and behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster: but Abner and the people lay round about him. 8. Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day: now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear, even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time. 9. And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the LORD's anointed, and be guiltless? 10. David said furthermore, As the LORD liveth, the LORD shall smite him, or his day shall come to die, or he shall descend into battle, and perish. 11. The LORD forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed: but I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go. 12. So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster, and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awakened:

awaked : for they *were* all asleep, because a deep sleep from the LORD was fallen upon them.

Here is, 1. David's bold adventure into Saul's camp in the night, accompanied only by his kinsman Abishai, the son of Zeruiah. He proposed it to him, and to another of his confidants, *ver. 6.* but the other either declined it as too dangerous an enterprise, or at least was content that Abishai, who was forward to it, should run the risk of it rather than himself. Whether David was prompted to do this by his own courage, or by an extraordinary impression upon his spirits, or by the oracle, doth not appear; but, like Gideon, he ventured through the guards, with a special assurance of the divine protection.

2. The posture he found the camp in. *Saul lay sleeping in the trench, or, as some read it, in his chariot, and in the midst of his carriages, with his spear stuck in the ground by him, to be ready, if his quarters should be beaten up, ver. 7.* and all the soldiers, even those that were appointed to stand sentinel, *were fast asleep, ver. 12.* thus were their eyes closed and their hands bound, *for a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them;* something extraordinary there was in it that they should all be asleep together, and so fast asleep, that David and Abishai walked and talked among them, and yet none of them stirred; sleep, when God gives it his beloved, is their rest and refreshment; but he can when he pleaseth, make it to his enemies their imprisonment. Thus are the *soft-hearted spoiled, they have slept their sleep, and none of the men of might have found their hands, at thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, Psalm lxxvi 5, 6.* It was a deep sleep from the Lord, who has the command of the powers of nature, and makes them to serve his purposes as he pleaseth. Whom God will disable or destroy, he binds up with a *spirit of slumber, Rom. xi. 8.* How helpless doth Saul and all his forces lie, all, in effect, disarmed and chained, and yet nothing is done to them, but only they are rocked asleep. How easily can God weaken the strongest, befoul the wisest, and baffle the most watchful? Let all his friends therefore trust him, and all his enemies fear him.

3. Abishai's request to David for a commission to dispatch Saul, with the spear that stuck at his bolster, which (now he lay so fair) he undertook to do at one blow, *ver. 8.* He would not urge David to kill him himself, because he had declined it before, when he had a like opportunity; but he begged earnestly that he would give him leave to do it; pleading that he was his enemy, not only cruel and implacable, but false and perfidious, whom no reason would rule, nor kindness work upon, and that *God had now delivered him into his hand, and did in effect, bid him strike.* The last advantage he had of this kind was indeed but accidental, when Saul happened to be in the cave with him at the same time; but in this there was something extraordinary; the deep sleep that was fallen on Saul and all his guards, was manifestly from the Lord, so that it was a special providence which gave him this opportunity; he ought not therefore to let it slip.

4. David's generous refusal to suffer any harm to be done to Saul, and in it a resolute adherence to his principles of loyalty, *ver. 9.* David charged Abishai not to destroy him; would not only not do it himself, but not permit another to do it. And he gave two reasons for it. 1. It would be a sinful affront to God's ordinance. Saul was the Lord's anointed king of Israel, by the special appointment and nomination of the God of Israel, the power that was, and to resist him was to *resist the ordinance of God, Rom. xiii. 2.* no man could do it and be guiltless; the thing he feared was guilt, and his concern more for his innocence than his safety. 2. It would be a sinful anticipation of God's providence; God had sufficiently shewed him, in Nabal's case, that if he left it to him to do him right, he would do it in due time; encouraged therefore by his experience, in that instance, he resolves to wait till God shall think fit to avenge him on Saul, and he will by no means *avenge himself, ver. 10.* *The Lord shall visit him, as he did Nabal, with some sudden stroke, or he shall die in battle, (as it proved he did soon after) or however, his day shall come to die a natural death, and David will contentedly wait till then, rather than force his way to the promised crown by any indirect methods.* The temptation indeed was very strong; but if he do it he sins against God, and therefore he resists the temptation with the utmost resolution, *ver. 11.* *The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed; no, I will never do it, nor suffer it to be done.* Thus bravely doth he prefer his conscience before his interest, and trust God with the issue.

5. The improvement he made of this opportunity for the further evidencing of his own integrity. He and Abishai carried away the spear and cruse of water which Saul had by his bed-side, *ver. 12.* and, which was very strange, none of all the guards were aware of them; if a physician had given them the strongest opiate or stupifying dose, they could not have been faster locked up with sleep. Saul's spear, which he had by him for defence, and his cup of water which he had for his refreshment, were both stolen from him while he slept. Thus do we lose our strength and our comfort, when we are careless and secure, and off our watch.

13. ¶ Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off, (a great space being between them :) 14. And David cried to the people, and to Abner the son of Ner, saying, Answerest thou not Abner? Then Abner answered and said, Who art thou that criest to the king? 15. And David said to Abner, Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king? for there came one of the people in to destroy the king thy lord. 16. This thing is not good that thou hast done: as the LORD liveth, ye are worthy to die, because ye have not kept your master the LORD's anointed: and now see where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was at his bolster. 17. And Saul knew David's voice, and said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And David said, It is my voice, my lord, O king. 18. And he said, Wherefore doth my lord thus pursue after his servant? for what have I done? or what evil is in mine hand? 19. Now therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant: If the LORD have stirred thee up against me, let him accept an offering: but if they be the children of men, cursed be they before the LORD; for they have driven me out this day, from abiding in

the inheritance of the LORD, saying, Go serve other gods. 20. Now therefore let not my blood fall to the earth before the face of the LORD; for the king of Israel is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

David being got safe from Saul's camp himself, and having brought with him proofs sufficient that he had been there, posts himself conveniently, so as that they might hear him, and yet not reach him, *ver. 13.* and then begins to reason with them upon what had passed.

1. He reasons ironically with Abner, and plainly banters him. David knew very well it was from the mighty power of God, that Abner and the rest of the guards were cast into so deep a sleep, and that his immediate hand was in it. But he reproached Abner, as unworthy to be captain of the life-guard, who could sleep, when the king his master lay so much exposed. By this it appears that the hand of God locked them up in this deep sleep, that as soon as ever David was got out of danger, a very little thing awakened them, even David's voice at a great distance roused them, *ver. 14.* Abner got up (we may suppose it early in a summer's morning) and enquired who called and disturbed the king's repose. It is I, saith David, and then he upbraids him with his sleeping, when he should have been upon his guard. Perhaps Abner looking upon David as a despicable enemy and one that there was no danger from, had neglected to set a watch; however, he himself ought to have been more wakeful. David, to put him into a confusion, tells him, 1. That he had lost his honour, *ver. 15.* *Art not thou a man?* So the word is, a man in office, that art bound, by the duty of thy place, to inspect the soldiery? Art not thou in reputation for a valiant man? So thou wouldest be esteemed; a man of such courage and conduct as that there is none like thee; but now thou art shamed for ever: Thou a general! Thou a sluggard! 2. That he had deserved to lose his head, *ver. 16.* *Ye are all worthy to die, by martial law, for being off your guard, when you had the king himself asleep in the midst of you. Ecce signum.* See where the king's spear is, in the hand of him whom the king himself is pleased to count his enemy. They that took away this, might as easily and safely have taken away his life. Now see who are the king's best friends; you that neglected him and left him exposed, or I that protected him, when he was exposed. You pursue me as worthy to die, and irritate Saul against me; but who is worthy to die now? Note, Sometimes those that unjustly condemn others, are justly left to fall into condemnation themselves.

2. He reasons seriously and affectionately with Saul. By this time he was so well awake as to hear what was said, and to discern who said it, *ver. 17.* *Is this thy voice, my son David?* In the same manner he had expressed his resentings, *chap. xxiv. 16.* he had given his wife to another, and yet calls him son; thrilled after his blood, and yet his glad to hear his voice. Those are bad indeed that have never any convictions of good, nor any good impressions. And now David has as fair an opportunity of reaching Saul's conscience, as he had just now of taking away his life; this he lays hold on, though not of that, and enters into a close argument with him, concerning the trouble he still continued to give him, endeavouring to persuade him to let fall the persecution, and be reconciled.

1. He complains of the very melancholy condition he was brought into by the enmity of Saul against him. Two things he laments, 1. That he was driven from his master, and from his business. *My lord pursues after his servant, ver. 18.* How gladly would I serve thee as formerly, if my service might be accepted, but instead of being owned as a servant, I am pursued as a rebel, and my lord is my enemy, and he, whom I would follow with respect, I am constrained to flee from. 2. That he was driven from his God and from his religion; and this was a much greater grievance than the former, *ver. 19.* They have driven me out from the inheritance of the Lord, have made Canaan too hot for me, at least the inhabited parts of it, and have forced me into the deserts and mountains, and will ere long oblige me quite to quit the country. And that which troubled him, was not so much that he was driven out from his own inheritance, as that he was driven out from the inheritance of the Lord, the holy land. It should be more comfortable to us to think of God's title to our estates, and his interest in them, than of our own; and that with them we may honour him, than that with them we may maintain ourselves. Nor was it so much his trouble that he was constrained to live among strangers, as that he was constrained to live among the worshippers of strange gods, and was thereby thrust into temptation to join with them in their idolatrous worship. His enemies did in effect send him to go serve other gods, and perhaps he had heard that some of them had spoken to that purpose of him. They that forbid our attendance on God's ordinances, do what in them lies to estrange us from God, and to make us heathens. It David had not been a man of extraordinary grace and firmness to his religion, the ill usage he met with from his own prince and people, who were Israelites and worshippers of the true God, would have prejudiced him against the religion they professed, and have driven him to communicate with idolaters. If these be Israelites, might he have said, let me live and die with Philistines; and that it had not that effect was no thanks to them. We are to reckon that the greatest injury that can be done us, which exposeth us to sin. Of those who thus led David into temptation, he here saith, *Cursed be they before the Lord.* Those fall under a curse that thrust out those whom God receives, and send those to the devil, who are dear to God.

2. He insists upon his own innocency. *What have I done, & what evil is in mine hand? ver. 18.* He had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had never done, nor ever designed any mischief to the person, honour, or government of his prince, nor to any of the interests of his country: he had lately had Saul's own testimony concerning him, *chap. xxiv. 17.* *Thou art more righteous than I.* It was very unreasonable and wicked for Saul to pursue him as a criminal, when he could not charge him with any crime.

3. He endeavours to convince Saul that his pursuit of him was not only an ill thing, but a mean thing, and much below him. *The king of Israel, whose dignity is great, and who has so much other work to do, is come out to seek a flea, as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains, ver. 20.* The pursuit a poor game for the king of Israel to catch at. He compares himself to a partridge, a very innocent harmless bird, that, when attempts are made upon its life, flies if it can, but makes no resistance. And would Saul bring the flower of his army into the field, only to hunt one poor partridge? What a disparagement was this to his honour? What a stain would it be to his memory! To trample upon so weak and patient as well as so innocent an enemy, *James v. 6.* *Ye have killed the just, and he doth not resist you.*

4. He desires that the care of the controversy might be searched into, and some proper method taken to bring it to an end, *ver. 19.* Saul himself could not say that justice put him on thus to persecute David, or that he was obliged to do it for the public safety: David was not willing to say (though it was very true) that Saul's own envy and malice put him on to do it, and therefore he concludes it must be attributed either to the righteous judgment

judgment of God, or to the unrighteous designs of evil men. Now, 1. *If the Lord have stirred thee up against me*, either in displeasure to me, taking this way to punish me for my sins against him, though, as to thee, I am guiltless: or in displeasure to thee, if it be the effect of that evil spirit from the Lord which troubles thee: *let him accept an offering from us both*: let us join in making our peace with God, and reconciling ourselves to him, which may be done by sacrifice; and then I hope the sin will be pardoned, whatever it is, and the trouble, which is so great a vexation both to thee and me, will come to an end. See the right method of peace-making; let us first make God our friend by Christ the great sacrifice, and then all our enmities shall be slain, Eph. ii. 16. Prov. xvi. 7. But, 2. If thou art put upon it by wicked men, that incense thee against me, *curfed be they before the Lord*, i. e. they are very ill people, and it is fit they should be abandoned as such, and excluded from the king's court and councils. He decently lays the blame upon the evil counsellors who advised the king to that which was dishonourable and dishonest, and insists upon it that they be removed from about him, and forbidden his presence, as men cursed before the Lord, and then he hoped he should gain his petition, which is, ver. 20. *Let not my blood fall to the earth*, as thou threatenest, for it is before the face of the Lord, who will take cognizance of the wrong, and avenge it. Thus pathetically doth David plead with Saul for his life, and in order to that, for his favourable opinion of him.

21. ¶ Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David, for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly. 22. And David answered and said, Behold the king's spear, and let one of the young men come over and fetch it. 23. The LORD render to every man his righteousness and his faithfulness: for the LORD delivered thee into my hand to-day, but I would not stretch forth mine hand against the LORD's anointed. 24. And, behold, as thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in the eyes of the LORD, and let him deliver me out of all tribulation. 25. Then Saul said to David, Blessed be thou my son David: thou shalt both do great things, and also shalt still prevail. So David went on his way, and Saul returned to his place.

1. Here, is 1. Saul's penitent confession of his fault and folly in persecuting David, and his promise to do so no more. This second instance of David's respect to him wrought more upon him than the former, and extorted from him better acknowledgments, ver. 21. 1. He owns himself melted and quite overcome by David's kindness to him. *My soul was precious in thine eyes this day*, which I thought had been odious. 2. He acknowledges he had done very ill to persecute him: That he had therein acted against God's law. *I have sinned*: and against his own interest, *I have played the fool*, in pursuing him as an enemy who would have been one of my best friends if I could but have thought so; herein (saith he) I have erred exceedingly, and wronged both thee and myself. Note, That that sin play the fool, and err exceedingly; those especially that hate and persecute God's people, Job xiv. 28. 3. He invites him to court again; *Return, my son David*. Those that understand themselves will see it their interest to have those about them that behave themselves wisely, as David did, and have God with them. 4. He promises him that he would not persecute him as he had done, but protect him. *I will no more do thee harm*. We have reason to think, according to the mood he was now in, he meant as he said, and yet neither his confession nor his promise of amendment came from a principle of true repentance.

2. David's improvement of Saul's convictions and confessions, and the evidence he had to produce of his own sincerity. He desired that one of the footmen might fetch the spear, ver. 22. and then, ver. 23. 1. He appeals to God as judge of the controversy. *The Lord render to every man his righteousness*. David by faith is sure he will do it, for he infallibly knows the true characters of all persons and actions, and is inflexibly just to render to every man according to his work; and by prayer he desires he would do it, wherein he doth in effect pray against Saul, who had dealt unrighteously and unfaithfully with him; *Give them according to their deeds*, Phil. xxviii. 4. but principally intends it as a prayer for himself, that God would protect him in his righteousness and faithfulness, and reward him for it, since Saul so ill requited him. 2. He reminds Saul again of the proof he had now given of his respect to him, from a principle of loyalty; *I would not stretch forth mine hand against the Lord's anointed*: intimating to Saul, that the anointing oil was his protection, for which he was indebted to the Lord, and ought to express his gratitude to him, had he been a common person, he would not have been so tender of him; and perhaps with this further reach Saul knew, or had reason to think that David was the Lord's anointed too, and therefore by the same rule, Saul ought to be as tender of David's life as he had been of his. 3. Not relying much on Saul's promises, he put himself under God's protection, and begs his favour, ver. 24. *Let my life be much set by in the eyes of the Lord*, how light soever thou makest of it. Thus he takes God to be his paymaster for his kindness to Saul, which they may with a holy confidence do, that *do well and suffer for it*.

3. Saul's prediction of David's advancement. He commends him, ver. 25. *Blessed be thou my son David*. So strong was the conviction Saul was now under of David's honesty, that he was not ashamed to condemn himself and applaud David, even in the hearing of his own soldiers, who could not but blush to think that they were come out so furiously against a man whom their master, when he meets, caresseth thus. He foretells his victories, and his elevation at last. *Thou shalt do great things*. Note, Those who make conscience of doing that which is truly good, may come, by the divine assistance, to do that which is truly great. He adds, *Thou shalt also still prevail*, more and more; he means against himself, but was loth to speak that out. The princely qualities which appeared in David, his generosity in sparing Saul, his military authority in reprimanding Abner for sleeping, his care of the public good, and the signal tokens of God's presence with him, convinced Saul that he would certainly be advanced to the throne at last, according to the prophecies concerning him.

Lastly, A palliative cure being thus made of the wound, they parted friends. Saul returned to Gibeath re-infecta, ashamed of the expedition he had made: but David could not take his word so far as to return with him. Those that have been once false, do not deserve to be trusted another time. Therefore David went on his way. And after this parting it doth not appear that ever Saul and David saw one another again.

No. XLV.

C H A P. XXVII.

David was a man after God's own heart, and yet he had his faults, which are recorded, not for our imitation, but for our admonition; witness the story of this chapter, in which, though (1.) We find, to his praise, that he prudently took care of his own safety and his family's, ver. 2—4. and valiantly fought Israel's battles against the Canaanites, ver. 8, 9. yet (2.) We find, to his dishonour, 1. That he began to despair of his deliverance, ver. 1. 2. That he deserted his own country, and went to dwell in the land of the Philistines, ver. 1, 5—7. 3. That he imposed upon Achish with an equivocation, if not a lie, concerning his expedition, ver. 10—12.

1. **A**ND David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines, and Saul shall despair of me, to seek me any more in any coast of Israel: so shall I escape out of his hand. 2. And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him, unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath. 3. And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, even David, with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal's wife. 4. And it was told Saul that David was fled to Gath: and he sought no more again for him. 5. ¶ And David said unto Achish, if I have now found grace in thine eyes, let them give me a place in some town in the country, that I may dwell there: for why should thy servant dwell in the royal city with thee? 6. Then Achish gave him Ziklag that day: wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day. 7. And the time that David dwelt in the country of the Philistines, was a full year and four months.

Here is, 1. The prevalency of David's fear, which was the effect of the weakness of his faith, ver. 1. *He said in his heart* (so it may be read) in his commings with it concerning his present condition, *I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul*. He represented to himself the restless rage and malice of Saul, who could not be wrought into a reconciliation; the treachery of his own countrymen, witness that of the Ziphites once again: he looked upon his own forces, and observed how few they were, and that no recruits had come in to him of a great while, nor could he perceive that he got any ground; and from hence in a melancholy mood, he draws this dark conclusion, *I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul*. But, O thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt? Was he not anointed to be king? Did not that infer an assurance, that he should be preserved to the kingdom? Though he had no reason to trust Saul's promises, had he not all the reason in the world to trust the promise of God? His experience of the particular care providence took of him, ought to have encouraged him. He that has delivered, doth and will: But unbelief is a sin that really begets even good men: *When without are fightings, within are fears*, and it is a hard matter to get over them. Lord increase our faith!

2. The resolution he came to hereupon. Now Saul was for this time returning to his place, he determined to take this opportunity of retiring into the Philistines country. Consulting his own heart only, and not the ephod or the prophet, he concludes, *There is nothing better for me, than I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines*. Long trials are in danger of tiring the faith and patience even of very good men. Now, 1. Saul was an enemy to himself and his kingdom, in driving him to this extremity. He weakened his own interest when he expelled from his service, and forced into the service of his enemies, to great a general as David was, and so brave a regiment as he had the command of. 2. David was no friend to himself in taking this course. God had appointed him to set up his standard in the land of Judah, chap. xvii. 5. There God had wonderfully preserved him, and employed him sometimes for the good of his country, why then should he think of deserting his post? How could he expect the protection of the God of Israel, if he went out of the borders of the land of Israel? Can he expect to be safe among the Philistines, out of whose hands he had lately escaped so narrowly by feigning himself mad! Will he receive obligations from those now, whom he knows when he comes to be king, he must not return kindness to, but be under an obligation to make war upon? He will hereby gratify his enemies who bid him go serve other gods, that they might have wherewith to reproach him; and will very much weaken the hands of his friends, who would not have wherewith to answer that reproach. See what need we have to pray, *Lord lead us not into temptation*.

3. The kind reception he had at Gath; Achish bid him welcome, partly out of generosity, being proud of entertaining so brave a man; partly out of policy, hoping to engage him for ever to his service, and that his example would invite many more to desert, and come over to him. No doubt he gave David a solemn promise of protection, which he could rely upon when he could not trust Saul's promises: We may blush to think that the word of a Philistine should go further than the word of an Israelite, who, if an Israelite indeed, would be without guile. And that the city of Gath should be a place of refuge for a good man when the cities of Israel are made too hot for him. David, 1. Brought his men with him, ver. 2. that they might guard him, and might themselves be safe where he was: And to recommend himself the more to Achish, who hoped to have service out of him. 2. He brought his family with him, his wives and his household, so did all his men, ver. 2, 3. Masters of families ought to take care of those that are committed to them, to protect and provide for those of their own house, and to dwell with them as men of knowledge.

4. Saul's desisting from the further persecution of him, ver. 4. *He sought no more again for him*; this intimates that notwithstanding the professions of repentance he had lately made, if he had David in his reach, he would have been at him again: But because he dares not come where he is, he resolves to let him alone: Thus many seem to leave their sins, but really their sins leave them; they would persist in them if they could. Saul sought no more for him, contenting himself with this banishment, since he could not have his blood: and hoping it may be, (as he had done chap. xviii. 25;) that he would sometime or other fall by the hand of the Philistines: and though he would rather have the pleasure of destroying him himself, yet if they do it he will be satisfied, so that it may be done effectually.

5. David's removal from Gath to Ziklag.

1. David's request for leave to remove, was prudent and very modest, ver. 5. 1. It was really prudent. David knew what it was to be envied in the court of Saul, and had much more reason to fear in the court of Achish, and therefore declines preferment there, and wishes for a settlement in the country, where he might be private, more within himself, and less in other people's way.

In a town of his own, he might have the more free exercise of his religion, and keep his men better to it, and not have his righteous soul vexed, as it was at Gath, with the idolatries of the Philistines. 2. As it was presented to Achish, it was very modest. He doth not prescribe to him what place he should assign him, only begs it might be in some town in the country, where he pleased; beggars must not be choosers; But gives this for a reason, *Why should thy servant dwell in the royal city?* to crowd thee, and disoblige those about thee. Note, Those that would stand fast, must not covet to stand high; and humble souls aim not to dwell in royal cities.

2. The grant which Achish made him upon that request, was very generous and kind, ver. 6, 7. Achish gave him Ziklag. Hereby, 1. Israel recovered their ancient right: for Ziklag was in the lot of the tribe of Judah, *Josh. xv. 31.* and afterwards, out of that lot, was assigned with some other cities to Simeon, *Josh. xix. 5.* but either it was never subdued, or the Philistines had in some struggle with Israel made themselves masters of it: Perhaps they had got it unjustly, and Achish being a man of sense and honour, took this occasion to restore it: *The righteous God judgeth righteously.* 2. David gained a commodious settlement, not only at a distance from Gath, but bordering upon Israel, where he might keep up a correspondence with his own countrymen, and whither they might resort to him upon the revolution that was now approaching. Though we do not find that he augmented his forces at all, while Saul lived (for chap. xxx. 10. he has but his *six hundred men*) yet immediately after Saul's death, that was the rendezvous of his friend; Nay, it should seem, that while he kept himself close because of Saul, multitudes resorted to him, at least, to assure him of their sincere intentions, *1 Chron. xii. 1—22.* And this further advantage David gained, that Ziklag was annexed to the crown, at least the royalty of it pertained to the kings of Judah ever after, ver. 6. Note, There is nothing lost by humility and modesty, and a willingness to retire. Real advantages follow those that flee from imaginary honour. Here David continued for some days, even four months, as it may very well be read, ver. 7. or some days above four months. The Seventy read it, only some months, so long he waited for the set time of his accession to the throne; for *he that believeth will not make haste.*

8. ¶ And David and his men went up and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt. 9. And David smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive, and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel, and returned, and came to Achish. 10. And Achish said, Whither have ye made a road to-day? And David said, Against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Jerahmeelites, and against the south of the Kenites. 11. And David saved neither man nor woman alive, to bring tidings to Gath, saying, lest they should tell on us, saying, So did David, and so will be his manner, all the while he dwelleth in the country of the Philistines. 12. And Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever.

Here is an account of David's actions, while he was in the land of the Philistines: a fierce attack he had made upon some remains of the devoted nations, his success in it, and the representation he gave of it to Achish.

1. We may excuse him from injustice and cruelty in this action, because these people whom he cut off, were such as heaven had long since doomed to destruction, and he that did it, was one whom heaven had ordained to dominion; so that the thing was very fit to be done, and he was very fit to do it. It was not for him that was anointed to fight the Lord's battles, to sit still in sloth, however he thought fit in modesty to retire. He desired to be safe from Saul only, that he might expose himself for Israel; he avenged an old quarrel that God had with these nations, and at the same time fetched in provisions for himself and his army, for by their swords they must live. The Amalekites were to be all cut off, probably the Jeshurites and Gezrites were branches of Amalek; Saul was rejected for sparing them. David makes up the deficiency of his obedience before he succeeds him. He smote them, and left none alive, ver. 8, 9. The service paid itself, for they carried off abundance of spoil, which served for the subsistence of David's forces.

2. Yet we cannot excuse him from dissimulation with Achish, in the account he gave him of this expedition.

(1.) It seems David was not willing he should know the truth, and therefore spared none to carry tidings to Gath, ver. 11. not because he was ashamed of what he had done as an ill thing, but because he was afraid, if the Philistines knew it, they would be apprehensive of danger to themselves or their allies, by harbouring him among them, and would expel him their coasts. It would be easy to conclude, if so he did, so will be his manner, and therefore he industriously conceals it from him, which it seems he could do, by putting them all to the sword, for none of their neighbours would inform against him, nor, perhaps, would soon come to the knowledge of what was done. Intelligence not being so readily communicated then as now.

(2.) He hid it from Achish, with an equivocation not at all becoming his character. Being asked which way he had made his rally, he answered, *against the south of Judah*, ver. 10. It was true, he had invaded those countries, that lay south of Judah, but he made Achish believe he had invaded those that lay south in Judah, the Ziphites suppose, that had once and again betrayed him; so Achish understood him, and from thence inferred, that he had made the people abhor him, and so riveted himself in the interest of Achish. The fidelity of Achish to him, his good opinion of him, and the confidence he put in him, aggravates his sin in deceiving him thus. Which, with some other such instances, David seems penitently to reflect upon, when he prays, *remove from me the way of lying.*

C H A P. XXVIII.

Preparations are herein making for that war, which will put an end to the life and reign of Saul, and so make way for David to the

throne. In this war, (1.) The Philistines are the aggressors, and Achish their king makes David his confidant, ver. 1, 2. (2.) The Israelites prepare to meet them, and Saul their king makes the devil his privy counsellor, and thereby fills the measure of his iniquity. Observe, (1.) The despairing condition which Saul was in, ver. 3—6. (2.) The application he made to a witch, to bring him up Samuel, ver. 7—14. (3.) His discourse with the apparition, ver. 15—19. (4.) The damp it struck upon him, ver. 21—25.

1. AND it came to pass in these days, that the Philistines gathered their armies together for warfare to fight with Israel: and Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men. 2. And David said to Achish, Surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do. And Achish said to David, Therefore will I make thee keeper of mine head for ever. 3. Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city: and Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land. 4. And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. 5. And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. 6. And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.

Here is, 1. The design of the Philistines against Israel: they resolved to fight them, ver. 1. If the Israelites had not forsaken God, there had been no Philistines remaining to molest them; if Saul had not forsaken him, they had by this time been put out of all danger by him. The Philistines took an opportunity to make this attempt, when they had David among them, whom they feared more than Saul and all his forces.

2. The expectation Achish had of assistance from David in this war, and the encouragement David gave to expect it. *Thou shalt go with me to battle*, saith Achish; if I protect thee, I may demand service from thee; and he will think himself happy, if he may have such a man as David on his side, who prospered whithersoever he went. David gives him an ambiguous answer, we will see what will be done, it will be time enough to talk of that hereafter, but surely thou shalt know what thy servant can do, ver. 2. i. e. I will consider in what post I may be best able to serve thee, if thou wilt but give me leave to choose it. Thus he keeps himself free from a promise to serve him, and yet keeps up his expectation of it. For Achish took it in no other sense, but as an engagement to assist him, and promised him thereupon, that he would make him captain of the guards, protector, or prime minister of state.

3. The drawing of the armies on both sides into the field, ver. 4. The Philistines pitched at Shunem, which was in the tribe of Issachar, a great way north from their country. It seems the land of Israel was ill guarded, when the Philistines could march their army into the very heart of their country. Saul, while he pursues David, left his people naked and exposed. On some of the adjacent mountains of Gilboa, Saul mustered his forces, and prepares to engage the Philistines, which he had little heart to do, now the Spirit of the Lord was departed from him.

4. The terror Saul was in, and the loss he was at upon this occasion. He saw the host of the Philistines, and by his own view of them, and the intelligence his spies brought him, he perceived they were more numerous, better armed, and in better heart than his own were, which made him afraid, so that his heart greatly trembled, ver. 5. Had he kept close to God, he needed not have been afraid at the sight of an army of Philistines, but now he had provoked God to forsake him, his interest failed, his armies dwindled and looked mean, and, which was worse, his spirits failed him, his heart sunk within him. A guilty conscience made him tremble at the shaking of a leaf: now he remembered the guilty blood of the Amalekites which he had spared, and the innocent blood of the priests, which he had spilt; his sins are set in order before his eyes, and put him in confusion, ruffle all his counsels, rob him of all his courage, and possess him with a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation. Note, Troubles are terrors to the children of disobedience. In this distress Saul enquired of the Lord, ver. 6. Need drives those to God that in the day of their prosperity slighted his oracles and alarms: *Lord in trouble have they visited thee*, Isa. xxvi. 16. Did ever any seek the Lord and miss of finding him? Yes, Saul did; the Lord answered him not, took no notice either of his petitions or of his enquiries; gave him no direction what to do, nor any encouragement to hope that he would be with him. Should he be enquired of at all, by such a one as Saul? Ezek. xiv. 3. No; he could not expect an answer of each, for, (1.) He enquired in such a manner, that it was as if he had not enquired at all. Therefore it is said, *1 Chron. x. 14. He enquired not of the Lord*, for he did it faintly, and coldly, and with a secret design, if God did not answer him, to consult the devil. He did not inquire in faith, but with a double unstable mind. (2.) He enquired of the Lord when it was too late, when the days of his probation were over, and he was finally rejected. *Seek the Lord while he may be found*, for there is a time when he will not be found. (3.) He had forfeited the benefit of the methods of enquiry. Could he that hated and persecuted Samuel and David, who were both prophets, expect to be answered by prophets? Or he that had slain the high-priest, to be answered by dreams? No, *Benot deceived, God is not mocked.*

5. The mention of some things, that had happened a good while ago, to introduce the following story, ver. 7. (1.) The death of Samuel. Samuel was dead, which made the Philistines the more bold and Saul the more afraid, for had Samuel been alive, he thought his presence and countenance, his good advice, and good prayers, would have stood him in stead in his distress. (2.) Saul's edict against witchcraft. He had put the laws in execution against those that had familiar spirits, who must not be suffered to live, Exod. xxii. 18. Some think he did this in the beginning of his reign, while he was under Samuel's influence; others think it was lately done, for it is spoken of here, ver. 9. as a late edict. Perhaps, when Saul was himself troubled with an evil spirit, he suspected that he was bewitched, and for that reason cut off all that had familiar spirits. Many seem zealous against sin, when they themselves are any way hurt by it, that will inform against swearers if they swear at them, or against drunkards if in their drink they abuse them, who otherwise have no concern for the glory of God.

God, nor any dislike of sin as sin. However it was commendable in Saul, thus to use his power for the terror and restraint of those evil doers. Note, Many seem enemies to sin in others, while they indulge it in themselves. Saul did drive the devil out of his kingdom, and yet harboured him in his heart, by envy and malice.

7. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor. 8. And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night; and he said, I pray thee divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee. 9. And the woman said unto him, Behold thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die? 10. And Saul swore to her by the LORD, saying, As the LORD liveth, there shall no punishment happen to thee for this thing. 11. Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. 12. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice: And the woman spake to Saul, saying, Why hast thou deceived me? for thou art Saul. 13. And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: for what sawest thou? And the woman said unto Saul, I saw gods ascending out of the earth. 14. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground, and bowed himself.

Here, 1. Saul hearkens unto a witch, *ver. 7.* When God answered him not, if he had humbled himself by repentance, and persevered in seeking God, who knows but that at length he might have been intreated for him; but since he can discern no comfort, either from heaven or earth, (*Jsa. viii. 21, 22.*) he resolves to knock at the gates of hell, and to see if any there will befriend him, and give him advice: *Seek me a woman that has a familiar spirit, ver. 7.* And his servants were, too officious to serve him in this ill thing; they presently recommended one to him at Endor a (city not far off) who had escaped the execution of Saul's edict: to her he resolves to apply himself. Herein he is chargeable, 1. With contempt of the God of Israel; as if any creature could do him a kindness when God had left him, and frowned upon him. 2. With contradiction to himself. He knew the heinousness of the sin of witchcraft, else he would not have cut off those that had familiar spirits; yet now he has recourse to that as an oracle, which he had before condemned as an abomination. It is common for men to inveigh severely against those sins which they are in no temptation to, but afterwards suffer themselves to be overcome by them. Had one told Saul when he was destroying the witches, that he himself would ere long consult with one, he would have said as Hazael did, *What, is thy servant a dog?* But who knows what mischiefs they will run into that forsake God, and are forsaken of him?

2. Hearing of one he hastens to her, but goes by night, and in disguise, only with two servants, and probably on foot, *ver. 8.* See how those that are led captive by Satan are forced, 1. To disparage themselves. Never did Saul look so mean as when he went sneaking to a sorry witch to know his fortune. 2. To dissemble themselves. Evil works are works of darkness, and they hate the light, neither care for coming to it. Saul went to the witch incognito, not in his robes, but in the habit of a common soldier, not only lest the witch herself if she had known him, should have declined to serve him, either for fear he came to trapan her, or to be revenged on him for his edict against those of her profession, but lest his own people should know it, and abhor him for it. Such is the power of natural conscience; that even those who do evil, blush and are ashamed to do it.

9. He tells her his errand, and promiseth her impunity. 1. All he desires of her is, to bring him up one from the dead, whom he had a mind to discourse with. It was necromancy, or divination from the dead, that he hoped to serve his purpose by; this was expressly forbidden by the law, *Deut. xviii. 11.* seeking for the living to the dead, *Isa. viii. 19.* Bring me up him whom I shall name, *ver. 8.* This supposeth it as generally taken for granted, that souls exist after death; and that when men die there is no end of them: That separate souls have great knowledge; but to think that any good souls should come up at the beck of an evil spirit, or that God, who had denied a man the benefit of his own institutions, should suffer him to reap any real advantage by a cursed diabolical invention, was very absurd. 2. She signifies her fear of the Lord, and her suspicion that this stranger came to draw her into a snare, *ver. 9.* Thou knowest what Saul has done. Providence ordered it so, that Saul should be told to his face of his edict against witches, at this very time when he was consulting one, for the greater aggravation of his sin. She insists upon the peril of the law, perhaps to raise her rates, for though no mention be made of her fee, no doubt she demanded and had a large one. Observe, how sensible she is of danger by the edict of Saul, and what care she is in to guard against the danger of that; but not at all apprehensive of the obligations of God's law, and the terrors of his wrath. She considers what Saul had done, not what God had done against such practices, and fears a snare laid for her life, more than a snare laid for her soul. It is common for sinners to be more afraid of punishment from men, than of God's righteous judgment. But, 3. Saul promiseth with an oath not to betray her, *ver. 10.* It was his duty as a king to punish her, and he knew it, yet he swears not to do it; as if he could by his own oath bind himself from that, which by the divine command he was bound to. But he promised more than he could perform, when he said, *There shall no punishment happen to thee,* for he that could not secure himself, much less could secure her from divine vengeance.

4. Samuel who was lately dead, is the person whom Saul desired to have some talk with; and the witch with her enchantments, gratifies his desire, and brings them together.

1. As soon as Saul had given the witch the assurance she desired, that he would not discover her, she applied herself to her witchcrafts, and asked very confidently, *Whom shall I bring up to thee?* *ver. 11.* Note, Hope

of impunity embolden sinners in their evil ways, and hardens their hearts.

2. Saul desires to speak with Samuel. *Bring me up Samuel.* Samuel had anointed him to the kingdom, and had formerly been his faithful friend and counsellor, and therefore with him he wished to advise. While Samuel was living at Ramah, not far from Gibeah of Saul, and presided there in the school of the prophets, we never read of Saul's going to him to advise with him in any of the difficulties he was in, it had been well for him if he had: then he slighted him, and perhaps hated him; looking upon him to be in David's interest: but now he is dead, O for Samuel again! By all means, *Bring me up Samuel.* Note, many that despise and persecute God's saints and ministers when they are living, would be glad to have them again when they are gone. Send Lazarus to me, and send Lazarus to my father's house, *Luke xvi. 24-27.* The sepulchres of the righteous are garnished.

3. Here is a seeming defect or chasm in the story; Saul said, *Bring me up Samuel,* and the very next words are *When the woman saw Samuel,* *ver. 12.* Whereas one would have expected to be told how she performed the operation, what spells and charms she used, or that some little intimation should be given of what she said or did: but the profound silence of the scripture concerning it, speaks us not to covet to know the depths of Satan, *Rev. ii. 24.* nor to have our curiosity gratified with any accounts of the mysteries of iniquity. It has been said of the books of some of the popish confessors, that by their descriptions of sin, they have taught men to commit it; but the scripture conceals sinful art, that we may be simple concerning evil, *Rom. xvi. 19.*

4. The witch upon sight of the apparition, was aware that her client was Saul, her familiar spirit, it is likely, informing her of it, *ver. 12.* Why hast thou deceived me with a disguise? for thou art Saul, the very man that I am afraid of above any man: thus she gave Saul to understand the power of her art, in that she could discover him through his disguise; and yet she feared lest hereafter, at least, he should take advantage against her for what she was now doing. Had she believed that it was really Samuel whom she saw, she would have had more reason to be afraid of him, who was a good prophet, than Saul who was a wicked king. But the wrath of earthly princes is feared by most, more than the wrath of the King of kings.

5. Saul, who we may suppose, was kept at a distance in the next room, bid her not be afraid of him, but go on with the operation, and enquired what she saw? *ver. 13.* O, faith the woman, I saw gods ascending out of the earth, i. e. a spirit: they called angels gods, because spiritual beings. Poor gods that ascend out of the earth! but she speaks the language of the heathen, who had their internal deities, and had them in veneration. If Saul had thought it necessary to his conversation with Samuel, that the body of Samuel should be called out of the grave, he would have taken the witch with him to Ramah, where his sepulchre was: but the design was wholly upon his soul, which yet if it became visible, it was expected would appear in the usual resemblance of the body; and God permitted the devil to answer the design, to put on Samuel's shape, that they who would not receive the lore of the truth might be given up to strong delusions, and believe a lie. That it could not be the soul of Samuel himself they might easily apprehend, when it ascended out of the earth, for the spirit of a man, much more of a good man, goes upward, *Ecc. iii. 21.* But if people will be deceived, is it just with God to say, let them be deceived. That the devil by the divine permission, should be able to personate Samuel is not strange, since he can transform himself into an angel of light: nor is it strange he should be permitted to do it upon this occasion; that Saul might be driven to despair, by enquiring of the devil, who would not, in a right manner, enquire of the Lord, by which he might have had comfort. Saul being told of gods ascending, was eager to know what was the form of this deity, and in what shape he appeared; so far was he from conceiving any horror at it, his heart being wretchedly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Saul it seems, was not permitted to see any manner of similitude himself, but he must take the woman's word for it, that she saw an old man covered with a mantle or robe, the habit of a judge, which Samuel had sometimes worn, and some think it was for the sake of that, and the majesty of its aspect, that she called this apparition Elohim, a God, or gods: for so magistrates are styled, *Psal. lxxxii. 1.*

6. Saul perceiving by the woman's description, that it was Samuel, stooped with his face to the ground, either as it is generally taken in reverence to Samuel, though he saw him not, or perhaps to listen to that soft and muttering voice which he now expected to hear; for they that had familiar spirits, peeped and muttered, *Isa. viii. 19.* and it should seem Saul bowed himself, (probably by the witch's direction,) that he might hear what was whispered, and listen carefully to it: for the voice of one that has a familiar spirit, is said to come out of the ground, and to whisper out of the dust, *Isa. xxix. 4.* He would stoop to that, who would not stoop to the word of God.

15. ¶ And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up? And Saul answered I am sore distressed, for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams: therefore I have called thee, that thou mayest make known unto me what I shall do. 16. Then said Samuel, Wherefore then dost thou ask of me, seeing the LORD is departed from thee and is become thine enemy? 17. And the LORD hath done to him as he spake by me: for the LORD hath rent the kingdom out of thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour even to David; 18. Because thou obeyedst not the voice of the LORD, nor executedst his fierce wrath upon Amalek; therefore hath the LORD done this thing unto thee this day. 19. Moreover the LORD will also deliver Israel with thee, into the hand of the Philistines: and to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me: the LORD also shall deliver the host of Israel into the hand of the Philistines.

We have here the conference between Saul and Satan: Saul came in disguise, *ver. 8.* but Satan soon discovered him, *ver. 12.* Satan comes in disguise, in the disguise of Samuel's mantle, and Saul cannot discover him. Such is the disadvantages we labour under in wrestling with the rulers of the darkness of this world, that they know us, while we are ignorant of their wiles and devices.

1. The spectre or apparition asks why he is sent for, and personating Samuel, he humours the thing well enough; *ver. 15.* Why hast thou disquieted me

me to bring me up? To us now this discovers that it was an evil spirit that personated Samuel; for (as Bishop Patrick observes) It is not in the power of witches to disturb the rest of good men, and to bring them back into the world when they please; nor would the true Samuel have acknowledged such a power in magical hearts; but to Saul this was a proper device of Satan's to draw veneration from him, to possess him with an opinion of the power of divination, and so to rivet him in the devil's interests.

2. Saul makes his complaint to this counterfeit Samuel, mistaking him for the true; and a most doleful complaint it is; *I am sore distressed*, and know not what to do, *for the Philistines make war against me*; yet I should do well enough with them if I had but the tokens of God's presence with me; but, alas! *God is departed from me*. He complained not of God's withdrawals till he fell into trouble, till the *Philistines made war against him*, and then he begins to lament God's departure. He that in his prosperity enquired not after God, in his adversity thought it hard that God answered him not, nor took any notice of his enquiries, either by dreams or prophets; he neither gave answers immediately himself, nor sent them by any of his messengers. He doth not, like a penitent, own the righteousness of God in this; but, like a man enraged, flies out against God as unkind, and flies off from him; *therefore I have called thee*; as if Samuel, a servant of God, would favour those whom God frowned upon; or as if a dead prophet could do him more service than the living ones. One would think, by this, that he really desired to meet with the devil, and expected no other (though under the covert of Samuel's name) for he desires advice otherwise than from God, therefore from the devil that is a rival with God. God denies me, *therefore I come to thee*. *Flectere si nequeo Superos, Acheronta movebo*.

3. It is cold comfort which this evil spirit in Samuel's mantle gives to Saul, and is manifestly intended to drive him to despair and self-murder. Had it been the true Samuel, when Saul desired to be told what he should do, he would have bid him repent, and make his peace with God, and recal David from his banishment, and would then have told him, that he might hope in this way to find mercy with God; but instead of that he represents his case as helpless and hopeless, serving him as he did Judas, to whom he was first a tempter, and then a tormenter, persuading him first to sell his master, and then to hang himself.

1. He upbraids him with his present distress, ver. 15. tells him, not only that God was departed from him, but that he was become his enemy, and therefore he must expect no comfortable answer from him: *Wherefore dost thou ask me? How can I be thy friend, when God is thine enemy? or thy counsellor, when he has left thee?*

2. He upbraids him with the anointing of David to the kingdom, ver. 17. He could not have touched upon a string that sounded more unpleasant than this to Saul. Nothing is said to reconcile him to David, but all tends rather to exasperate him against David, and to widen the breach. Yet, to make him believe that he was Samuel, he saith, it was what God spake by him. The devil knows how to speak with an air of religion, and can teach false apostles to transform themselves into the apostles of Christ, and imitate their language. Those who use spells and charms, and plead in defence of them that they find nothing in them but what is good, may remember what good words the devil here spoke, and yet what a malicious design.

3. He upbraids him with his disobedience to the command of God in not destroying the Amalekites, ver. 18. Satan had helped him to palliate and excuse that sin, when Samuel was dealing with him to bring him to repentance, but how he aggravates it, to make him despair of God's mercy. See what they get that hearken to Satan's temptations; he himself will be their accuser, and insult over them. And see whom they resemble that allure others to that which is evil, and reproach them for it when they have done.

4. He foretels his approaching ruin, ver. 19. 1. That his army should be routed by the Philistines. This is twice mentioned. *The Lord shall deliver Israel into the hand of the Philistines*. This he might foresee by considering the superior strength and number of the Philistines, the weakness of the armies of Israel, Saul's timorousness, and especially God's departure from them. Yet to personate a prophet he very gravely ascribes it once and again to God, the Lord shall do it. 2. That he and his sons should be slain in the battle. *To-morrow*, that is, in a little time, (and supposing that it was now after midnight, I see not but it may be taken strictly for the very next day after that which was now begun) *thou and thy sons shall be with me*, i. e. in the state of the dead, separate from the body. Had this been the true Samuel, he could not have foretold it, unless God had revealed it to him; and though it were an evil spirit, God might by him foretel it: as we read of an evil spirit that foresaw Ahab's fall at Ramath-Gilead; and was instrumental in it, 1 Kings xxii. 20. as perhaps this evil spirit here was in Saul's destruction by the divine permission. That evil spirit flattered Ahab, this frightened Saul, and both that they might fall; so miserable are they that are under the power of Satan; for whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest; allude to Prov. xxix. 9.

20. Then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid because of the words of Samuel, and there was no strength in him, for he had eaten no bread all the day, nor all the night. 21. ¶ And the woman came unto Saul, and saw that he was sore troubled, and said unto him, Behold thine handmaid hath obeyed thy voice, and I have put my life in my hand, and have hearkened unto the words which thou spakest unto me. 22. ¶ Now therefore, I pray thee, hearken thou also unto the voice of thine handmaid, and let me set a morsel of bread before thee; and eat, that thou mayest have strength when thou goest on thy way, 23. But he refused, and said, I will not eat. But his servants, together with the woman, compelled him, and he hearkened unto their voice; so he arose from the earth, and sat upon the bed. 24. And the woman had a fat calf in the house, and she hastened and killed it, and took flour and kneaded it, and did bake unleavened bread thereof. 25. And she brought it before Saul, and before his servants, and they did eat: then they rose up and went away that night.

We are here told how Saul received this terrible message from the ghost he consulted. He desired to be told what he should do, ver. 15. but is only told what he had not done and what should be done to him. Those that

expect any good counsel or comfort otherwise than from God, and in the way of his institutions, will be as wretchedly disappointed as Saul here was.

Observe,

1. How he sunk under the load, ver. 20. he was indeed unfit to bear it, having eaten nothing all the day before, nor that night; he came fasting from the camp, and continued fasting, not for want of food but for want of a stomach. The fear he was in of the power of the Philistines, ver. 5, took away his appetite, or perhaps the struggle he had with his own conscience after he had entertained the thought of consulting the witch made him to nauseate even his necessary food, though never so dainty. This made him an easy prey to this fresh terror that now came upon him like an armed man. He fell all along on the earth, as if the archers of the Philistines had already hit him, and there was no strength in him to bear up against these heavy tidings. Now he had enough of consulting witches, and found them miserable comforters. When God in his word speaks terror to sinners, at the same time he opens to them a door of hope if they repent: but they that apply themselves to the gates of hell for succour, must there expect darkness without any glimpse of light.

With what difficulty he was persuaded to take so much relief as was necessary to carry him back to his post in the camp. The witch, it should seem, had left Saul alone with the spectre, to have his talk with him by himself, but perhaps hearing him fall and groan, and perceiving him to be in a mighty agony, she came to him, ver. 21. and was mighty importunate with him to take some refreshment, that he might be able to get clear from the house, fearing that if he should be sick, especially if he should die there, she should be punished for it as a traitor, though she had escaped punishment as a witch. It is probable this made her so solicitous to help him, rather than any affection to him. But what a deplorable condition had he brought himself to, when he needed so wretched a comforter!

1. She shews herself very importunate with him to take some refreshment, pleads, ver. 21 that she had obeyed his voice to the endangering of her life, and therefore why should not he hearken to her voice for the relieving of his life, ver. 22. She had a fat calf at hand (and the word signifies one that was made use of in treading out the corn, and therefore could the worse be spared) this she prepares for his entertainment, ver. 20. Josephus is large in applauding the extraordinary courtesy and liberality of this woman, and recommending it as an example of compassion to the distressed, and readiness to communicate for their relief, though we have no prospect of being recompensed for it.

1. He shewed himself very averse to it. He refused, and said, I will not eat, ver. 23. choosing rather to die obscurely by famine than honourably by the sword. Had he laboured only under a defect of animal spirits, food might help him; but, alas! his case was out of the reach of such succours. What are dainty meats to a wounded conscience? As vinegar upon nitre, so is he that sings songs to a heavy heart; so disagreeable and unwelcome.

3. The woman at length, with the help of his servants, over-persuaded him, against his inclination and resolution to take some refreshment. Not by force, but by friendly advice they compelled him, ver. 23. and of no other but such a rational and courteous compulsion, are we to understand that in the parable, *Compel them to come in*, Luke xiv. 23. How forcible are right words, when men are pressed by them to that which is for their own interest? Job vi. 25. Somewhat revived Saul was with this entertainment, so that he and his servants, when they had eaten, rose up and went away before it was light, ver. 25. that they might hasten to their business, and that they might not be seen to come out of such a scandalous house. Josephus here much admires the bravery and magnanimity of Saul, that though he was assured he should lose both his life and honour, yet he must not desert his army, but resolutely returned to the camp, and stood ready for an engagement. I more admire the hardness of his heart, that he did not again apply himself to God by repentance and prayer, in hopes yet to obtain at least a reprieve; but he desperately run headlong upon his own ruin: And perhaps now wrath and envy were come upon him to the uttermost, he was the better reconciled to his hard fate, now he was told that his sons, and Jonathan among the rest, whom he hated for his affection to David, should die with him. If he must fall, he cared not what delations of his family and kingdom accompanied his fall, hoping it would be the worse for his successor. *ἰπὸν Σαυλὸς γὰρ μὴδὲν ἔσπευε*. He begged not, as David, let thy hand be against me, but not against thy people.

C H A P. XXIX.

How Saul, who was forsaken of God, when he was in a strait, was more and more perplexed and embarrassed with his own counsels, we read in the foregoing chapter: In this chapter we find, how David, who kept close to God, when he was in a strait, was extricated and brought off by the providence of God, without any contrivance of his own. We have him, (1.) Marching with the Philistines, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Excepted against by the lords of the Philistines, ver. 3—5. (3.) Happily dismissed by Achish from that service which did so ill become him, and which he knew not how to decline, ver. 6—11.

1. NOW the Philistines gathered together all their armies to Aphek; and the Israelites pitched by a fountain which is in Jezreel. 2. And the lords of the Philistines passed on by hundreds and by thousands: but David and his men passed on in the reeward with Achish. 3. ¶ Then said the princes of the Philistines, What do these Hebrews here? And Achish said unto the princes of the Philistines, Is not this David the servant of Saul the king of Israel, which hath been with me these days or these years, and I have found no fault in him since he fell unto me unto this day? 4. And the princes of the Philistines were wroth with him, and the princes of the Philistines said unto him, Make this fellow return, that he may go again to his place, which thou hast appointed him, and let him not go down with us to battle, lest in the battle he be an adversary to us; for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? Should it not be with the heads of these men? 5. Is not this David, of whom they sang, one to another in dances, saying, Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?

Here

Here is, 1. The great strait that David was in, which we may suppose he himself was aware of, though we read not of his asking advice from God, nor any project of his own to get clear of it. The two armies of the Philistines and the Israelites were encamped and ready to engage, ver. 1. Achish who had been kind to David, had obliged him to come himself, and bring the forces he had into his service. David came accordingly, and upon a review of the army, was found with Achish, in the post assigned him in the rear, ver. 2. Now, 1. If when the armies engaged he should retire, and quit his post, he would fall under the indelible reproach, not only of cowardice and treachery, but of base ingratitude to Achish, who had been his protector and benefactor, and had reposed a confidence in him, and from whom he had received a very honourable commission. Such an ill thing as this, he could by no means persuade him to do. 2. If he should, as was expected from him, fight for the Philistines against Israel, he would incur the imputation of being an enemy to the Israel of God, and a traitor to his country, would make his own people hate him, and unanimously oppose his coming to the crown, as unworthy the name of an Israelite, much more the honour and trust of a king of Israel, who had fought against them, under the banner of the uncircumcised. If Saul should be killed (as it proved he was in this engagement) the fault would be laid at David's door, as if he had killed him; so that on each side there seemed to be both sin and scandal. This was the strait he was in; and a great strait it was to a good man, greater to see sin before him than to see trouble. Into this strait he brought himself by his own unadvisedness, in quitting the land of Judah, and going among the uncircumcised: Those that associate themselves with wicked people, and grow intimate with them, it is strange if they come off without guilt or grief, or both. What he himself proposed to do, doth not appear: Perhaps he designed to act only as keeper to the king's head, the post assigned him, chap. xxviii. 2. and not to do any thing offensively against Israel: But it would have been very hard to come so near the brink of sin and not to fall in. Therefore, though God might justly have left him in this difficulty, to chastise him for his folly, yet, because his heart was upright with him, he would not suffer him to be tempted above what he was able, but with the temptation made a way for him to escape, 1 Cor. x. 13.

2. A door opened for his deliverance out of this strait: God inclined the hearts of the princes of the Philistines to oppose his being employed in the battle, and to insist upon his being dismissed: And thus their enmity befriended him, when no friend he had was capable of doing him such a kindness. (1.) It was a proper question which they asked upon the mustering of the forces, *what do these Hebrews here?* ver. 3. What confidence can we put in them? Or what service can we expect from them? *A Hebrew is out of his place*, and if he have the spirit of a Hebrew, *is out of his element*, when he is in the camp of the Philistines, and deserves to be baited there. David used to hate the congregation of evil doers, however he came now to be among them, Psal. xxvi. 5. (2.) It was an honourable testimony which Achish on this occasion gave to David. He looked upon him as a refugee, that fled from a wrongful persecution in his own country, and had put himself under his protection, whom therefore he was obliged in justice to secure, and thought he might in prudence employ him, for (saith he) he has been with me *these days, or these years*, i. e. a considerable time, many days at his court, a year or two in his country, and he never found any fault in him, nor saw any cause to distrust his fidelity, or to think any other but that he was heartily come over to him. By this it appears, that David had carried himself with a great deal of caution, and had prudently concealed the affection he still retained for his own people: We have need to walk in wisdom towards them that are without, to keep our mouth when the wicked are before us, and to be upon the reserve. (3.) Yet the princes are peremptory in it that he must be sent home; and they give a good reason for their insisting on it. 1. Because he had been an old enemy to the Philistines; witness the ditty that was sung in honour of his triumphs over them, *Saul slew his thousands and David his ten thousands*, ver. 5. It will be a reproach to us to harbour and trust so noted a destroyer of our people; nor can it be thought he should now act heartily against Saul, who then acted so vigorously with him and for him. Who would be fond of popular praise and applause, when even that, another time may be turned against a man to his reproach? 2. Because he might be a most dangerous enemy to them, and do them more mischief than all Saul's army could, ver. 4. He may in the battle be an adversary to us, and surprise us with an attack in the rear, while their army chargeth us in the front, and we have reason to think he will do so, that by betraying us he may reconcile himself to his master. Who can trust a man, who besides his affection to his country, will think it his interest to be false to us? It is dangerous putting confidence in a reconciled enemy.

6. Then Achish called David, and said unto him, Surely, as the LORD liveth, thou hast been upright, and thy going out, and thy coming in with me in the host, is good in my sight: for I have not found evil in thee, since the day of thy coming unto me unto this day: nevertheless the lords favour thee not. 7. Wherefore now return, and go in peace, that thou displease not the lords of the Philistines. 8. ¶ And David said unto Achish, But what have I done? and what hast thou found in thy servant, so long as I have been with thee unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies of my lord the king? 9. And Achish answered and said to David, I know that thou art good in my sight as an angel of God: notwithstanding the princes of the Philistines have said, He shall not go up with us to the battle. 10. Wherefore now rise up early in the morning, with thy master's servants that are come with thee: and as soon as ye be up early in the morning, and have light, depart. 11. So David and his men rose up early to depart in the morning, to return into the land of the Philistines, and the Philistines went up to Jezreel.

If the reasons Achish had to trust David, were stronger than the reasons which the princes offered why they should distrust him, (as I do not see that in policy they were, for the princes were certainly in the right) yet Achish was but one out of five, though the chief, and the only one that had the title of king, and in a council of war, held on this occasion, he was over-voted, and obliged to dismiss David, though he was extremely fond of him. Kings cannot always do as they would, nor have such as they would about them.

No. XLVI.

1. The discharge Achish gives him is very honourable, and not a final discharge, but only from the present service. (1.) He signifies the great pleasure and satisfaction he had taken in him, and in his conversation. Thou art good in my sight as an angel of God, ver. 10. Wise and good men will gain respect wherever they go, from all that know how to make a right estimate of persons and things, though of different professions in religion. What Achish saith of David, God by the prophet saith of the house of David, (Zech. xii. 8.) that it shall be as the angel of the Lord: But this here is a court compliment: that there is a divine promise. (2.) He gives him a testimonial of his good behaviour, ver. 6. It is very full and in obliging terms, *thou hast been upright*, and thy whole carriage has been good in my sight, and I have not found evil in thee. Saul would not have given him such an approbation, to whom he had done far more service than to Achish. God's people should behave themselves always so inoffensively, as if possible to get the good word of all they have dealings with. And it is a debt we owe to those who have acquitted themselves well, to give them the praise of it. (3.) He lays all the blame of his dismissal upon the princes, who would by no means suffer him to continue in the camp. The king loves thee entirely, and would venture his life in thy hand, but the lords favour thee not, and we must not disoblige them, nor can we oppose them, therefore return and go in peace. He had better part with his favourite, than occasion a disgust among his generals, and a mutiny in his army. He intimates a reason why they were uneasy at him, not so much for his own sake, as for the sake of his soldiers that attended him, whom he calls *his master's servants*, viz. Saul's ver. 10. they could not trust him, but not them. (4.) He orders him to be gone early, as soon as it was light, ver. 10. to prevent their further resentments, and the jealousies they would have been apt to conceive if he had lingered.

2. His reception of this discourse is very complimentary, I doubt not without some degree of dissimulation. What? (saith David) must I leave my lord the king, whom I am bound by office to protect; just now when he is going to expose himself in the field; why may not I go fight against the enemies of my lord the king? ver. 8. seeming fond to serve him when he was at this juncture really fond to leave him, but he was not willing Achish should know that he was. None knows how strong the temptation is to compliment and dissimulation, which they are in that attend great men, and how hard it is to avoid it.

3. God's providence ordered it wisely and graciously for him: For besides that the snare was broke, and he was delivered out of the dilemma to which he was reduced, it proved a happy hastening of him to the relief of his own city, which sorely wanted him, though he did not know it. Thus the disgrace which the lords of the Philistines put upon him, proved more ways than one an advantage to him. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his ways*. What he doth with us we know now, but we shall know hereafter, and shall see it was all for good.

C H A P. XXX.

When David was dismissed from the army of the Philistines, he did not go over to the camp of Israel, but being expelled by Saul, observed an exact neutrality, and silently retired to his own city Ziklag, leaving the armies ready to engage. Now here we are told, (1.) What a melancholy posture he found the city in, all laid waste by the Amalekites, and what distress he and his men were in upon it, ver. 1—6. (2.) What course he took to recover what he had lost. He enquired of God, and took out a commission from him, ver. 7, 8. pursued the enemy, ver. 9, 10. gained intelligence from a straggler, ver. 11—15. attacked and routed the rapparees, ver. 16, 17. and recovered all that they had carried off, ver. 18—20. (3.) What method he observed in the distribution of the spoil, ver. 21—31.

1. AND it came to pass when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had invaded the south, and Ziklag, and smitten Ziklag, and burnt it with fire: 2. And had taken the women captives that were therein; they slew not any, either great or small, but carried them away, and went on their way. 3. ¶ So David and his men came to the city, and behold it was burned with fire, and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters were taken captives. 4. Then David and the people that were with him, lift up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep. 5. And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. 6. And David was greatly distressed: for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons, and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the LORD his God.

Here is, 1. The descent which the Amalekites made upon Ziklag, in David's absence, and the desolations they made there. They surprised the city when it was left unguarded, plundered it, burnt it, and carried all the women and children captives, ver. 1, 2. They intended by this to revenge the like havoc that David had lately made of them and their country, chap. xxvii. 8. He that had made so many enemies, ought not to have left his own concerns so naked and defenceless. They that make bold with others, must expect that others will make as bold with them, and provide accordingly. Now observe in this, 1. The cruelty of Saul's pity (as it proved) in sparing the Amalekites; if he had utterly destroyed them, as he ought to have done, these had not been in being to do this mischief. 2. How David was corrected for being so forward to go with the Philistines against Israel. God shewed him that he had better have staid at home, and looked after his own business. When we go abroad in the way of our duty, we may comfortably hope that God will take care of our families in our absence, but not otherwise. (3.) How wonderfully God inclined the hearts of these Amalekites to carry the women and children away captives, and not to kill them. When David invaded them, he put all to the sword, chap. xxvii. 9. and no reason can be given why they did not return it upon his city, but that God restrained them; for he has all hearts in his hands, and saith to the fury of the most cruel men, *hitherto it shall come and no further*. Whether they spared them, to lead them in triumph, or to sell them, or use them for slaves, God's hand must be acknowledged, who designed to make

make use of the Amalekites for the correction, not for the destruction, of the house of David.

2. The mighty confusion and consternation that David and his men were in, when they found their houses in ashes, and their wives and children gone into captivity. Three days march they had from the camp of the Philistines hence to Ziklag, and now they came thither weary, hoping to find rest in their houses, and joy in their families, behold a black and dismal scene is presented to them, *ver. 3.* which set them all a weeping (David himself not excepted) though they were men of war, *till they had no more power to weep, ver. 4.* The mention of David's wives, Ahinoam and Abigail, and their being carried captive, intimates, that that went nearer his heart than any thing else. Note, It is no disparagement to the boldest bravest spirits to lament the calamities of relations and friends. Observe, 1. This trouble came upon them when they were absent. It was the ancient policy of Amalek to take Israel at an advantage. 2. It met them at their return, and, for ought appears, their own eyes gave them the first intelligence of it. Note, When we go abroad, we cannot foresee what evil tidings may meet us when we come home again. The going out may be very cheerful, and yet the coming in be very doleful. *Boast not thyself therefore of to-morrow, nor of to-night neither, for thou knowest not what a day, or a piece of a day, may bring forth, Prov. xxvii. 1.* If when we come off a journey, we find our *tabernacle in peace*, and not laid waste, as David here found his, let the Lord be praised for it.

3. The mutiny and murmuring of David's men against him, *ver. 6.* David was greatly distressed, for in the midst of all his losses his own people spake of stoning him, 1. Because they looked upon him as the occasion of their calamities, by the provocation he had given the Amalekites, and his indiscretion in leaving Ziklag without a garrison in it. Thus apt are we when we are in trouble to fly into a rage against those who are in any way the occasion of our trouble, while we overlook the divine providence, and have not that regard to the operations of God's hand in it, which would silence our passions, and make us patient. 2. Because now they began to despair of that preferment, which they promised themselves in following David. They hoped ere this to have been all princes, and now to find themselves all beggars, was such a disappointment to them, as made them grow outrageous, and threaten the life of him, on whom under God they had the greatest dependence. What absurdities will not ungoverned passions run men into? This was a sore trial to the man after God's own heart, and could not but go very near him. Saul had driven him his country; the Philistines had driven him their camp, the Amalekites had plundered his city, his wives were taken prisoners, and now to complete his woe, his own familiar friends, in whom he trusted, whom he had sheltered, and that did eat of his bread, instead of sympathizing with him, and offering him any relief, *lift up the heel against him*, and threatened to stone him. Great faith must expect such severe exercises: But it is observable, David was reduced to this extremity just before his accession to the throne, at this present time, perhaps the stroke was struck, which opened the door to his advancement. Things are sometimes at the worst with the church and people of God just before they begin to mend.

4. David's pious dependence upon the divine providence and grace in this distress: *But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.* 1. His men fretted at their loss; *the soul of the people was bitter*, so the word is, their own discontent and impatience added wormwood and gall to the affliction and misery, and made it doubly grievous: But David bore it better, though he had more reason than any of them to lament it, for they gave liberty to their passions, but he set his graces on work, and by encouraging himself in God, while they discouraged themselves, he kept his spirit calm and sedate. Or, 2. It is opposed to the threatening words his men gave out against him, *they spake of stoning him*, but he not offering to avenge the affront, nor terrified by their menaces *encouraged himself in the Lord his God*; believed and considered with application to his present case, the power and providence of God, his justice and goodness, the method he commonly takes of bringing low, and then raising up; his care of his people that serve him, and trust in him, and the particular promises he had made to him, of bringing him safe to the throne, and with these considerations supported himself, not doubting but the present trouble would end well. Note, Those that have taken the Lord for their God, may take encouragement from their relation to him in the worst of times. It is the duty and interest of all good people, whatever happens, to encourage themselves in God as their Lord and their God, assuring themselves that he can and will bring light out of darkness, peace out of trouble, and good out of evil, to all that love him, and are *called according to his purpose*, *Psalm xxvii. 13, 14.* It was David's practice, and he had the comfort of it; *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.* When he was at his wit's end, he was not at his faith's end.

7. And David said unto Abiathar the priest, Ahimelech's son, I pray thee bring me hither the ephod, and Abiathar brought thither the ephod to David. 8. And David enquired at the LORD, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And he answered him, Pursue; for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all. 9. So David went, he and his six hundred men that were with him, and came to the brook Besor, where those that were left behind, stayed. 10. But David pursued, he and four hundred men; (for two hundred abode behind, which were so faint, that they could not go over the brook Besor.) 11. ¶ And they found an Egyptian in the field, and brought him to David, and gave him bread, and he did eat, and they made him drink water. 12. And they gave him a piece of a cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins: and when he had eaten, his spirit came again to him: for he had eaten no bread nor drunk any water three days and three nights. 13. And David said unto him, To whom *belongest* thou? and whence *art* thou? And he said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to an Amalekite, and my master left me, because three days ago I fell sick. 14. We made an invasion upon the south of the Cherethites, and upon the coast which *belongeth* to Judah, and upon the south of Caleb, and we burnt Ziklag with fire. 15. And David said to him, Canst thou bring me down to this company? And he said, Swear unto me by God, that thou wilt

neither kill me, nor deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will bring thee down to this company. 16. ¶ And when he had brought him down, behold, they were spread abroad upon all the earth, eating, and drinking, and dancing, because of all the great spoil that they had taken out of the land of the Philistines, and out of the land of Judah. 17. And David smote them from the twilight, even unto the evening of the next day: and there escaped not a man of them, save four hundred young men, which rode upon camels, and fled. 18. And David recovered all that the Amalekites had carried away: and David rescued his two wives. 19. And there was nothing lacking to them, neither small nor great, neither sons nor daughters; neither spoil nor any thing that they had taken to them; David recovered all. 20. And David took all the flocks, and the herds, which they drove before those other cattle, and said, This is David's spoil.

Solomon observes, that *the righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead*; that *the just falleth seven times a day, and riseth again*; so it was with David. Many were his troubles, but the Lord delivered him out of them all; and particularly out of this which here we have an account of.

1. He enquired of the Lord both concerning his duty, *Shall I pursue after this troop?* And concerning the event, *Shall I overtake them?* *ver. 8.* It was a great advantage to David, that he had the high-priest with him; and the breast-plate of judgment, which as a public person he might consult in all his affairs, *Numb. xxvii. 21.* We cannot think that he left Abiathar and the ephod at Ziklag, for then he and it had been carried away by the Amalekites, unless we may suppose them hid by a special providence; that they might be ready for David to consult at his return. If we conclude that David had his priest and ephod with him in the camp of the Philistines; it was certainly a great neglect in him, that he did not enquire of the Lord by them, concerning his engagement to Achish: Perhaps he was ashamed to own his religion so far among the uncircumcised; but now he begins to apprehend, that this trouble is brought upon him to correct him for that oversight; and therefore the first thing he doth, is to call for the ephod. It is well if we get this good by our afflictions; to be minded by them of neglected duties, and particularly to be quickened by them to enquire of the Lord. See *1 Chron. xv. 13.* David had no room to doubt but that this war against these Amalekites was just, and that he had an inclination strong enough to let upon them, when it was for the recovery of that which was dearest to him in this world, and yet would not go about it without asking counsel of God, thereby owning his dependence upon God, and submission to him: If we thus in all our ways acknowledge God, we may expect that he will direct our steps, as he did David's here, answering him above what he asked, with an assurance that he should recover all.

2. He went himself in person, and took with him all the force he had, in pursuit of the Amalekites, *ver. 9, 10.* See how quickly, how easily, how effectually, the mutiny among the soldiers was qualified by his patience and faith. When they *spoke of stoning him*, *ver. 6.* if he had spoke of hanging them, or had ordered that the ringleaders of the faction should immediately have had their heads struck off, though it had been just, yet it might have been of pernicious consequence to his interest in this critical juncture; and while he and his men had been fighting it out, the Amalekites would have clearly carried off their spoil: but when he as a deaf man, heard not, smothered his resentments, and *encouraged himself in the Lord his God*, the tumult of the people was stilled by his gentleness, and the power of God on their hearts; and being thus mildly treated, they are now as ready to follow his foot, as they were but a little before to fly in his face. Meekness is the security of any government.

All his men were willing to go along with him in pursuit of the Amalekites, and he needed them all, but he was forced to drop a third part of them by the way, two hundred of his six were so fatigued with their long march, and sunk under the load of their grief, that they could not pass the brook Besor, but staid behind there. This was, 1. A great trial of David's faith, whether he could go on in a dependence upon the word of God, when so many of his men failed him. When we are disappointed and discouraged in our expectations from second causes, then to go on with cheerfulness, confiding in the divine power, this is giving glory to God, by believing against hope in hope. 2. A great instance of David's tenderness to his men, that he would by no means urge them beyond their strength, though the case itself was so very urgent. The Son of David thus considers the frame of his followers, who are not all alike strong and vigorous in their spiritual pursuits and conflicts; but where we are weak there he is kind, nay more, there he is strong, *2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.*

3. Providence threw one in their way that gave them intelligence of the enemy's motions, and guided theirs; a poor Egyptian lad, as despicable a piece of man's flesh as one should see alive, and yet is made instrumental of a great deal of good to David. *God chooseth the foolish things of the world, with them to confound the wise.* Observe, 1. His master's cruelty to him. He had got out of him all the service he could, and when he fell sick, probably being overtoiled with his work, he barbarously left him to perish in the field; when he was in no such haste, but he might have put him into some of the carriages, and brought him home, or at least have left him wherewithal to support himself. That master has the spirit of an Amalekite, not of an Israelite, that can thus use a servant worse than one would use a beast. *The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.* This Amalekite thought he should now have servants enow of the Israelites captives, and therefore cared not what became of his Egyptian slave; but could willingly let him die in a ditch for want of necessities, while he was *eating and drinking, ver. 16.* Justly did providence make this poor servant, that was thus basely abused, instrumental towards the destruction of a whole army of Amalekites, and his master among the rest: for God hears the cry of oppressed servants. 2. David's compassion to him; though he had reason to think he was one of those that had helped to destroy Ziklag, yet finding him in distress he generously relieved him, not only with *bread and water, ver. 11.* but with *figs and raisins, ver. 12.* Though the Israelites were in haste, and had no great plenty for themselves, and they would not *forbear to deliver one that was drawn unto death*, nor say, *Behold, we know it not, Prov. xxiv. 11, 12.* They are unworthy the name of Israelites, who shut up the bowels of their compassion from persons in distress. It was also prudently done to relieve this Egyptian, for though despicable, he was capable of doing them service, so it proved, though they were not certain of it when they relieved him. It is a good reason why we should neither do any injury, nor deny a kindness to any man, because we know not but some time or other it may be in his power

power to return either a kindness or an injury. 3. The intelligence David received from this poor Egyptian, when he was come to himself. He gave him an account concerning his party: (1.) What they had done, *ver. 14. He made an irruption, so and so.* The countries which David had pretended to Achish to have made an incursion upon, *chap. xxvii. 10.* they really had invaded and laid waste. What was then false now proved too true. 2. Whither they were gone, *ver. 15.* This he promised David to inform him of, upon condition he would spare his life and protect him from his master, who, if he could hear of him again (he thought) would add cruelty to cruelty. Such an opinion this poor Egyptian had of the obligation of an oath, that he desired no greater security for his life than that, *Swear unto me by God.* not by the gods of Egypt or Amalek, but by one supreme God.

4. David being directed to the place where they lay securely celebrating their triumphs, tell upon them, and, as he used to pray, *show his desires upon his enemies.*

1. The spoilers were cut off. The Amalekites finding the booty rich, and being got with it (as they thought) out of the reach of danger, were making themselves very merry with it, *ver. 16.* All thoughts of war were laid aside, nor were they in any haste to house their prey, but *spread themselves abroad on the earth* in the most careless manner that could be, and there they were found *eating and drinking, and dancing*, probably in honour of their idol gods, to whom they gave the praise of their success. In this posture David surprised them, which made the conquest of them, and the blow he gave them, the more easy to him, and the more dismal to them. Then are sinners nearest to ruin when they cry *peace and safety*, and *put the evil day far from them.* Nor doth any thing give our spiritual enemies more advantage against us than sensuality, and the indulgence of the flesh. *Eating and drinking, and dancing*, has been the soft and pleasant way in which many have gone down to the congregation of the dead. Finding them thus off their guard, and from their arms, many of them, it may be, drunk and unable to make any resistance, he put them all to the sword, and only four hundred escaped, *ver. 17.* Thus is the triumphing of the wicked short, and wrath comes on them, as on Belshazzar, when they are in the midst of their jollity.

2. The spoil was recovered and brought off, and nothing was lost, but a great deal gotten. 1. They retrieved all their own, *ver. 18, 19.* David rescued his two wives; that is mentioned particularly, because that pleased David more than all the rest of his achievements. Providence had so ordered it, that the Amalekites carefully preserved all that they had taken, concluding that they kept it for themselves, but really they preserved it for the right owners; so that there was nothing lacking to them; so it proved, when they concluded all was gone: so much better is God oftentimes to us, than our own fears. Our Lord Jesus was the son of David, and the son of Abraham; for in this he resembled them both, that he *took the prey from the mighty and led captivity captive*: Abraham, *Gen. xiv. 16.* and David here. But this was not all. 2. They took all that belonged to the Amalekites besides, *ver. 20. Flocks and herds*; either such as were taken from the Philistines, and others which David had the disposal of by the law of war; or perhaps he made a sally into the enemy's country, and fetched off these flocks and herds from thence, as interest for his own. This drove was put in the van of the triumph, with this proclamation, *This is David's spoil.* This we may thank him for. Those who lately spake of stoning him, now caressed him, and cried him up, because they got by him more than they had then lost. Thus is the world, and its sentiments, governed by interest.

21. ¶ And David came to the two hundred men, which were so faint that they could not follow David, whom they had made also to abide at the brook Besor: and they went forth to meet David, and to meet the people that were with him: and when David came near to the people, he saluted them. 22. Then answered all the wicked men, and men of Belial, of those that went with David, and said, Because they went not with us, we will not give them *ought* of the spoil that we have recovered, save to every man his wife and his children, that they may lead them away, and depart. 23. Then saith David, Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the LORD hath given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us, into our hand. 24. For who will hearken unto you in this matter? but as his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. 25. And it was so from that day forward that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day. 26. ¶ And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, (saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the LORD.) 27. To them which were in Beth-el, and to them which were in South-Ramoth, and to them which were in Jattir, 28. And to them which were in Aroer, and to them which were in Siphmoth, and to them which were in Elhtemoa, 29. And to them which were in Rachel, and to them which were in the cities of the Jerahmeelites, and to them which were in the cities of the Kenites, 30. And to them which were in Hormah, and to them which were in Chor-ashan, and to them which were in Athach, 31. And to them which were in Hebron, and to all the places where David himself and his men were wont to haunt.

We have here an account of the distribution of the spoil which was taken from the Amalekites. When the Amalekites had carried away a rich booty from the land of Judah and the Philistines, they spent it in sensuality, in eating and drinking, and making merry with it; but David disposed of the spoil taken after another manner, as one that knew that justice and charity must govern us, in the use we make of whatever we have in this world: what God gives us he designs we would do good with, not serve our lusts with. In the distribution of the spoil,

1. David was just and kind to those who abode by the stuff. They came forth to meet the conquerors, and to congratulate their success, though they could not contribute to it, *ver. 21.* for we should rejoice in a good work

done, though providence had laid us aside, and rendered us incapable of lending a hand to it. David received their address very kindly, and was so far from upbraiding them with their weakness, that he shewed himself solicitous concerning them: he saluted them, he asked them of peace, so the word is; enquired how they did, because he had left them faint, and not well: or wished them peace, bid them be of good cheer, they should lose nothing by staying behind; for of this they seemed afraid; David perhaps saw it in their countenance.

(1.) There were those that opposed their coming in to share in the spoil: some of David's soldiers, probably the same that spake of stoning him, spake now of defrauding their brethren, they are called wicked men, and men of Belial, *ver. 22.* Let not the best of men think it strange, if they have those attending them that are very bad and they cannot prevail to make them better. We may suppose David had instructed his soldiers, and prayed with them, and yet there were many among them that were wicked men, and men of Belial; often terrified with the apprehensions of death, and yet wicked men still, and men of Belial. These made a motion, that the two hundred men, who abode by the stuff, should only have their wives and children given them, but none of their goods. Well might they be called wicked men; for this speaks them, 1. Very covetous themselves, and greedy of gain; for hereby the more would fall to their share. A while ago they would gladly have given half their own to recover the other half, yet now they have all their own they are not content, unless they can have their brethren's too; so soon do men forget their low estate. All seek their own, and too often more than their own. 2. Very barbarous to their brethren, for to give them their wives and children, and not their estates, was to give them the mouths without the meat. What joy could they have of their families, if they had nothing to maintain them? Was this to do as they would be done by? These are men of Belial indeed, who delight in putting hardships upon their brethren, and care not who is starved, so they may be fed to the full.

(2.) David would by no means admit this, but ordered that they who tarried behind should come in for an equal share in the spoils with those that went to the battle, *ver. 23, 24.* This he did, 1. In gratitude to God. The spoil we have is that which God has given us; we have it from him, and therefore must use it under his direction as good stewards. Let this check us when we are tempted to misapply that which God has entrusted us with of this world's goods; nay, I must not do so with that which God has given me, not serve Satan and a base lust, with those things which are not only the creatures of his power, but the gifts of his bounty. God has righted us by delivering the company that came against us into our hand, let not us then wrong our brethren; God has been kind to us in preserving us, and giving us victory, let not us be unkind to them. God's mercy to us should make us merciful to one another. 2. In justice to them. It was true, they tarried behind; but, (1.) It was not for want of good will to the cause, or to their brethren, but because they had not strength to keep up with them. It was not their fault, but their infirmity; and therefore they fought not to suffer for it. (2.) Though they tarried behind now, they had formerly engaged many times in battle, and done their part as well as the best of their brethren, and their former services must be considered, now there was something to be got. (3.) Even now they did good service, for they abode by the stuff, to guard that which somebody must take care of, else that might have fallen into the hands of some other enemy. Every post of service is not alike a post of honour, yet those that are any way serviceable to the common interest, though in a meaner station, ought to share in the common advantages; as in the natural body, every member has its use, and therefore has its share of the nourishment. 1. Thus David overruled the wicked men, and men of Belial, with reason, but with a great deal of mildness (for the force of reason is sufficient, without the force of passion) he calls them *his brethren*, *ver. 23.* Superiors often lose their authority by haughtiness, but seldom by courtesy and condescension. 2. Thus he settled the matter for time to come, made it a statute of his kingdom (a statute of distributions, *primo Davidis*) an ordinance of war, *ver. 25.* that as his part is that goes down to the battle, and jeopard his life in the high places of the field, so shall his be that guards the carriages. Abraham returned the spoils of Sodom to the right owners, and quitted his title to them *jure belli.* If we help others to recover their right, we must not think that alters the property, and makes it ours. God appointed that the spoil of Midian should be divided between the soldiers and the whole congregation, *Numb. xxxii. 27.* The case here was somewhat different, but governed by the same general rule, that we are members one of another. The disciples at first had all things common, and we should still be ready to contribute, willing to communicate, 1 Tim. vi. 18. When kings of armies did flee apace, she that tarried at home did divide the spoil, *Plal lxxviii. 12.*

2. David was generous and kind to all his friends. When he had given every one his own with interest, there was a considerable overplus, which David, as general, had the disposal of; probably the spoil of the tents of the Amalekites, consisted much in plate and jewels, (*Judg. vii. 21-25.*) and those, because he thought they would but make his own soldiers proud and effeminate, he thought fit to make present of it to his friends, even the elders of Judah, *ver. 28.* Several places are here named to which he sent off these presents, all of them in or near the tribe of Judah: And the first placed name is Bethel, which signifies the house of God; that place shall be first served for its name's sake: or perhaps it means not the city so called, but the place where the ark was, which was therefore *the house of God*: Thither David sent the first and best, to them that attended there; for his sake who is the first and best. Hebron is named last, *ver. 31.* probably because thither he sent the residuum, which was the largest share, having an eye upon that place as fittest for his head quarters, 2 Sam. ii. 1.

In David's sending these presents, observe, 1. His generosity. He aimed not to enrich himself, but to serve his country; and therefore God afterwards enriched him, and set him to rule the country he had served. It becomes gracious souls to be generous: *there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.* 2. His gratitude. He sent presents to all the places where he and his men were wont to haunt, *ver. 13. i. e.* to all that he had received kindness from him, that had sheltered him, sent him intelligence or provisions. Note, Honesty, as well as honour, obliges us to requite the favours that have been done us, or at least make a real acknowledgment of them as far as is in the power of our hand. 3. His piety; that he calls it a blessing, for no present we give to our friends will be a comfort to them but as it is made so by the blessing of God; it intimates, that his prayers for them accompanied his present; also, that he sends them out of *the spoil of the enemies of the Lord*; so he calls them, not his enemies, that they might rejoice in the victory for the Lord's sake, and might join with them in thanksgivings for it. 4. His policy. That he sent these presents among his countrymen, to oblige them to be ready to appear for him upon his accession to the throne, which he now saw at hand. *A man's gift maketh room for him.* He was fit to be a king, who thus shewed the bounty and liberality of a king. Munificence recommends a man more than magnificence. The Ziphites had none of his presents, nor the men of Keilah, and thus he shewed, that though he was such a saint as not to revenge affronts, yet he was not such a fool as not to take notice of them.

C H A P. XXXI.

In the foregoing chapter we had David conquering, yea, more than a conqueror: in this chapter we have Saul conquered, and worse than a captive. Providence ordered it that both these things should be in the doing just at the same time. The very same day, perhaps, that David was triumphing over the Amalekites, were the Philistines triumphing over Saul: One is set over against the other, that men may see what comes of trusting in God, and what comes of forsaking him. We left Saul ready to engage the Philistines, with a shaking hand and an aching heart, having had his doom read him from hell, which he would not regard when it was read him from heaven. Let us now see what comes of him. Here is, 1. His army routed, ver. 1. 2. His three sons slain, ver. 2. 3. Himself wounded, ver. 3. Slain by his own hand, ver. 4. His armour-bearer, ver. 5. and all his men, ver. 6. 4. His country possessed by the Philistines, ver. 7. His camp plundered, his dead body deserted, ver. 8. His fall triumphed in, ver. 9. His body publicly exposed, ver. 10. and with difficulty rescued by the men of Jabesh-gilead, ver. 11—13. Thus fell the man that was rejected of God.

1. **N**OW the Philistines fought against Israel: and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. 2. And the Philistines followed hard upon Saul, and upon his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, Saul's sons. 3. And the battle went fore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was fore wounded of the archers. 4. Then said Saul unto his armour-bearer, Draw thy sword and thrust me through therewith, lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armour-bearer would not; for he was fore afraid: therefore Saul took a sword and fell upon it. 5. And when his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him. 6. So Saul died, and his three sons, and his armour-bearer, and all his men that same day together. 7. ¶ And when the men of Israel that were on the other side of the valley, and they that were on the other side Jordan, saw that the men of Israel fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, they forsook the cities, and fled; and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

The day of recompence is now come, in which Saul must account for the blood of the Amalekites, which he had sinfully spared, and that of the priests, which he had more sinfully spilt, and that of David, which he would have spilt, must come into the account. Now his day is come to fall, as David foresaw, when he should descend into battle, and perish, chap. xxvi. 10. Come and see the righteous judgments of God.

1. He sees his soldiers fall about him, ver. 1. Whether the Philistines were more numerous, better posted, and better led on, or what other advantages they had, we are not told: but it seems they were more vigorous, for they gave the onset; they fought against Israel, and the Israelites fled, and fell: The best of his troops were put into disorder, and multitudes slain; probably those whom Saul had employed in pursuing David. Thus they who had followed him, and served him in his sin, go before him in his fall, and there with him in his plagues.

2. He sees his sons fall before him. The victorious Philistines pressed most forcibly upon the king of Israel, and those about him; his three sons were next him (it is probable) and they were all three slain before his face, to his great grief; for they were the hopes of his family, and his great terror, for they were now the guard of his person; and he can conclude no other, but that his own turn comes next. His sons are named, ver. 2. and it grieves us to find Jonathan among them: That wise, valiant, good man, that was as much David's friend as Saul was his enemy; yet he falls with the rest. Duty to his father would not permit him to stay at home, or to retire when the armies engaged: and providence so orders it, that he falls in the common fate of his family, though he never involved himself in the guilt of it; so that the observation of Eliphaz doth not hold, Job iv. 7. *Who ever perished being innocent?* for here was one. What shall we say to it? 1. God would hereby complete the vexation of Saul in his dying moments, and the judgment that was to be executed upon his house. If the family must fall, Jonathan, that is one of it, must fall with it. 2. He would hereby make David's way to the crown the more clear and open. For though Jonathan himself would have cheerfully resigned all his title and interest to him, we have no reason to suspect any other; yet it is very probable many of the people would have made use of his name for the support of the house of Saul, or at least would have come in but slowly to David. If Ishbosheth (who was now left at home as one unfit for action, and so escaped) had so many friends, what would Jonathan have had, who had been the darling of the people, and had never forfeited their favour? They that were to fond to have a king like the nations, would be zealous for the right line, especially if that threw the crown upon such a head as Jonathan's: This would have embarrassed David; and if Jonathan could have prevailed to bring in all his interest to David, then it would have been said that Jonathan had made him king, whereas God was to have all the glory: *This is the Lord's doing.* So that though the death of Jonathan would be a great affliction to David, yet, by making him mindful of his own frailty, as well as by facilitating his accession to the throne, it would be an advantage to him. 3. God would hereby shew us, that the difference between good and bad is to be made in the other world, not in this: *All things come alike to all.* We cannot judge of the spiritual or eternal state of any, by the manner of their death; for in that there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked.

3. He himself is fore wounded by the Philistines, and then slain by his own hand. The archers hit him, ver. 3. so that he could neither fight nor fly, and therefore must inevitably fall into their hands; Thus, to make him the more miserable, destruction comes gradually upon him, and he dies so as to feel himself die. To that extremity was he now reduced, that, (1.) He was desirous to die by the hand of his own servant, rather than by the hand of the Philistines, lest they should abuse him as they did Samson. Miserable man! He finds himself dying, and all his care is, to keep his body out of the hands of the Philistines, but no care to resign his soul into

the hands of God who gave it, Eccl. xii. 7. As he lived, so he died, proud and jealous, and a terror to himself and all about him. They who rightly understand themselves, think it of no small account in comparison, how it is with them in death, so it may but be well with them after death. Those are in a deplorable condition indeed, who, being *bitter in soul, long for death, but it cometh not.* Job iii. 20, 21. especially those, who, despairing of the mercy of God, like Judas, leap into hell before them, to escape a hell within them. (2.) When he could not obtain that favour, he became his own executioner, thinking thereby to avoid shame, but running upon a heinous sin, and with it entailing upon his own name a mark of perpetual infamy, as *felo de se*, a self-murderer. Jonathan, who received his death-wound from the hand of the Philistines, and bravely yielded to the fate of war, died in the bed of honour, but Saul died as a fool dieth, as a coward dieth, a proud fool, a sneaking coward; died as a man that had neither fear of God, nor hope in God, neither the reason of a man, nor the religion of an Israelite, nor the resolution of a soldier. Let us all pray, *Lord, lead us not into temptation*, this temptation. His armour-bearer would not run him through, and he did well to refuse it; for no man's servant ought to be a slave to his master's lusts or passions of any kind; the reason given is, that he was fore afraid, not of death, for he himself run willingly upon that immediately; but having a profound reverence for the king his master, he could not conquer that so far as to do him any hurt; or perhaps he feared, lest his trembling hand should have given him but half a blow, and so have put him to the greater misery.

4. His armour-bearer who refused to kill him, refused not to die with him, but *fell likewise upon his sword*, ver. 5. This was an aggravating circumstance of the death of Saul, that by the example of his wickedness, in murdering himself, he drew in his servant to be guilty of the same wickedness, and *perished not alone in his iniquity.* The Jews say that Saul's armour-bearer was Doeg, whom he preferred to that dignity for killing the priests, and it so, justly doth his violent dealing return on his own head. David had foretold concerning him, that God would *destroy him for ever*, Psalm lii. 5.

5. The country was put into such confusion by the rout of Saul's army, that the inhabitants of the neighbouring cities (on that side Jordan, as it might be read) quitted them, and the Philistines for a time had possession of them, till things were settled in Israel, ver. 7. Such a sad pass had Saul by his wickedness brought his country to, which might have remained in the hands of the uncircumcised, if David had not been raised up to repair the breaches of it. See what a king he proved, for whom they rejected God and Samuel. They had still done wickedly (it is to be feared) as well as he, and therefore were *condemned both they and their king*, as the prophet had foretold concerning them, chap. xxii. 25. And to this reference is had long after, *Hos. xiii. 10, 11. Where are thy favours in all thy cities, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes: I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath; i. e. He was a plague to thee living, and dying: thou couldst expect no other.*

8. And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his three sons fallen in mount Gilboa. 9. And they cut off his head, and stripped off his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to publish it in the house of their idols, and among the people. 10. And they put his armour in the house of Ashtaroth: and they fastened his body to the wall of Beth-shan. 11. ¶ And when the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead heard of that which the Philistines had done to Saul, 12. All the valiant men arose, and went all night, and took the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and came to Jabesh, and burnt them there. 13. And they took their bones, and buried them under a tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

The scripture makes no mention of the souls of Saul and his sons, what became of them after they were dead; secret things belong not to us; but of their bodies only.

1. How they were basely abused by the Philistines. The day after the battle, when they had recovered their fatigue, they came to strip the slain, and among the rest, found the bodies of Saul and his three sons, ver. 8. Saul's armour-bearer perhaps, intended to honour his master, by following the example of his self-murder, and to shew thereby how well he loved him; but if he had consulted his reason more than his passions, he would have spared that foolish compliment, not only in justice to his own life, but in kindness to his master, to whom, by the opportunity of survivorship, he might have done all the service that could be done him by any man after he was dead: for he might in the night have conveyed away his body, and those of his sons, and buried them decently. But such false and foolish notions these vain men have (though they would be wise) of giving and receiving honour. Nay, it should seem Saul might have saved himself the fatal thrust, and have made his escape, for the pursuers (in fear of whom he slew himself) came not to the place where he was, till the next day: But whom God will destroy he insatiate, and utterly consumes with his terrors, See Job xviii. 5, &c.

Finding Saul's body, (which now it lay extended on the bloody turf, was distinguishable from the rest by its length, as it was while, erect, by its height, when he proudly overlooked the surrounding crowd) they will in that triumph over Israel's crown, and poorly gratify a barbarous and brutish revenge, by insulting the deserted corps, which, when alive, they had stood in awe of.

1. They cut off his head. Had they designed in this to revenge the cutting off of Goliath's head, they should rather have cut off the head of David, who did that execution, when he was in their country; they intended it in general, for a reproach to Israel, who promised themselves that a crowned, an anointed head, would have saved them from the Philistines, and a particular reproach to Saul, who was taller by the head than other men, which perhaps he was wont to boast of, but was now shorter by the head.

2. They stripped him of his armour, ver. 9. and sent that to be set up as a trophy of their victory, in the house of Ashtaroth their goddets, ver. 10. and we are told, 1 Chron. x. 10. (though it be omitted here) that they fastened his hand in the temple of Dagon. Thus did they ascribe the honour of their victory, not as they ought to have done, to the real justice of the true God, but to the imaginary power of their false gods; and by these respects, paid to the pretended deities, shamed those who give not the praise of their achievements to the living God. Ashtaroth the idol, that Israel had many a time gone a whoring after, now triumphs over them.

3. They sent expresses throughout their country, and ordered public notice to be given in the houses of their gods, of this victory they had obtained

tained, ver. 9.) that public rejoicings might be made, and thanks given to their gods. This David regretted sorely, 2 Sam. i. 20. *Tell it not in Gath.*

3. They fastened his body, and the bodies of his sons (as appears, ver. 12) to the wall of Beth-shan; a city that lay not far from Gilboa, and very near to the river Jordan. Hither the dead bodies were dragged, and here hung up in chains to be devoured by the birds of prey. Saul slew himself to avoid being abused by the Philistines, and never was royal corps so abused as his was, perhaps the more if they understood that he slew himself, and for what reason. He that thinks to save his honour by sin, will certainly lose it. See to what a height of insolence the Philistines were arrived just before David was raised up, who perfectly subdued them. Now they had slain Saul and his sons, they thought the land of Israel was their own for ever, but they soon found themselves deceived. When God has accomplished his whole work by them, he will accomplish it upon them. See *Iſa.* x. 5, 7.

2. How they were bravely rescued by the men of Jabesh-gilead. Little more than the river Jordan lay between Beth-shan and Jabesh-gilead, and Jordan was in that place passable by its fords; a bold adventure is therefore made by the valiant men of that city, who in the night passed the river, took down the dead bodies, and gave them decent burial, ver. 11, 12, 13. This they did, 1. Out of a common concern for the honour of Israel, for the land of Israel, which ought not to be defiled by the exposing of any dead bodies, and especially of the crown of Israel, which was thus profaned by the uncircumcised. 2. Out of a particular sense of gratitude to Saul, for his zeal and forwardness to rescue them from the Ammonites, when he first came to the throne, chap. xi. It is an argument of a generous spirit, and encouragement of beneficence, when the remembrance of kindnesses is thus

retained, and they are thus returned in an extremity. The men of Jabesh Gilead had done Saul better service, if they had sent their valiant men to him sooner, to strengthen him against the Philistines: But his day was come to fall, and now this is all the service they can do him; in honour to his memory.

We find not that any general mourning was made for the death of Saul, as was for the death of Samuel, chap. xxv. 1. only those Gileadites of Jabesh did him honour at his death; For, 1. They made a burning for the bodies to perfume them: So some understood the burning of them. They burnt spices over them, ver. 12. And that it was usual thus to do honour to their deceased friends, at least their princes, appears by the account of Aſa's funeral, 2 Chron. xvi. 14. that they made a very great burning for him. Or (as some think) they burnt the flesh, because it began to putrify. 2. They buried the bodies, when by burning over them, they had sweetened them, or, if they burnt them, they buried the bones and ashes) under a tree, which served for a grave-stone and monument. And lastly, they fasted seven days, i. e. each day of the seven they fasted till the evening; thus they lamented the death of Saul, and the present distracted state of Israel, and perhaps joined prayers with their fasting, for the re-establishment of their shattered state. Though when the wicked perish there is shouting, i. e. it is to be hoped a better state of things will ensue, which will be matter of joy, yet humanity obligeth as to shew a decent respect to dead bodies, especially to those of princes. This book began with the birth of Samuel, but now it ends with the burial of Saul, the comparing of which two together, will teach us to prefer the honour that comes from God, before any of the honour which this world pretends to have the disposal of.

THE END OF THE FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL.

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, Upon the SECOND BOOK of SAMUEL.

This Book is the history of the reign of king David. We had in the foregoing Book an account of his designation to the government and his struggles with Saul, which ended at length in the death of his persecutor: This book begins with his accession to the throne, and is entirely taken up with the affairs of the government during the forty years he reigned, and therefore is entitled by the Seventy, *The Second Book of the Kings*. It gives us an account of David's triumphs and his troubles. 1. His triumphs over the house of Saul, chap. i—iv. Over the Jebusites and Philistines, chap. v. In the bringing up of the ark, chap. vi. and vii. Over the neighbour nations that opposed him, chap. viii.—x. And so far the history is agreeable to what we might expect from David's character, and the choice made of him. But his cloud has a dark side. 2. We have his troubles, the cause of them, his sin in the matter of Uriah, chap. xi. and xii. The troubles themselves from the sin of Amnon, chap. xiii. The rebellion of Absalom, chap. xiv.—xix. and of Sheba, chap. xxi. And the plague in Israel for his numbering the people, chap. xxiv. besides the famine for the Gibeonites, chap. xxi. His song we have, chap. xxii. and his words and worthies, chap. xxiii. Many things in this history are very instructive; but for the hero, that is the subject of it, though in many instances he appears here very great, and very good, and very much the favourite of heaven, yet it must be confessed his honour shines brighter in the Psalms than in his Annals.

C H A P. I.

In the close of the foregoing Book (with which this is connected as a continuation of the same history) we had Saul's exit, he went down slain to the pit, though he was the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, we are now to look towards the rising sun, and to enquire where David is, and what he is doing. In this chapter we have, (1.) Tidings brought him to Ziklag of the death of Saul and Jonathan, by an Amalekite, who undertook to give him a particular narrative of it, ver. 1—10. (2.) David's sorrowful resentment of these tidings, ver. 11, 12. (3.) Justice done upon the messenger who boasted that he had helped Saul to dispatch himself, ver. 13—16. (4.) An elegy which David penned upon this occasion, ver. 17—27. And in all this David's breast appears very happily free from the sparks, either of revenge or ambition, and he observes a very good decorum.

1. **N**OW it came to pass after the death of Saul, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Amalekites, and David had abode two days in Ziklag: 2. It came even to pass on the third day, that behold a man came out of the camp from Saul, with his clothes rent, and earth upon his head: and so it was, when he came to David, that he fell to the earth, and did obeisance. 3. And David said unto him, From whence comest thou? And he said unto him, Out of the camp of Israel am I escaped. 4. And David said unto him, How went the matter? I pray thee tell me. And he answered, That the people are fled from No. XLVI.

the battle, and many of the people also are fallen and dead, and Saul and Jonathan his son are dead also. 5. And David said unto the young man, that told him, How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan his son be dead? 6. And the young man that told him, said, As I happened by chance upon mount Gilboa, behold, Saul leaned upon his spear: and lo, the chariots and horsemen followed hard after him. 7. And when he looked behind him, he saw me, and called unto me: and I answered, Here am I. 8. And he said unto me, Who art thou? And I answered him, I am an Amalekite. 9. He said unto him again, Stand, I pray thee, upon me, and slay me; for anguish is come upon me, because my life is yet whole in me. 10. So I stood upon him, and slew him, because I was sure he could not live after that he was fallen: and I took the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm, and have brought them hither unto my lord.

Here is, 1. David settling again in Ziklag his own city, after he rescued his family and friends out of the hands of the Amalekites, ver. 1. *he abode in Ziklag*. Thence he was now sending presents to his friends, 1 Sam. xxx: 26. and there he was ready to receive those that came into his interests; not men in distress and debt, as his followers were, but persons of quality in their country, *mighty men, men of war, and captains of thousands*, as we find 1 Chron. xii. 1, 8, 20. such came day by day to him, God stirring up their hearts to do so, till he had a great host, like the host of God, as it is said there, ver. 22. The secret springs of revolutions are unaccountable, and must be referred into that providence, which turns all hearts as the rivers of water

2. Intelligence brought him thither of the death of Saul. It was strange he did not leave some spies about the camps, to bring him early notice of the issue of the engagement; a sign he desired not Saul's woful day, nor was impatient to come to the throne, but willing to wait till those tidings were brought to him, which many a one would have sent more than half way to meet. He that believeth doth not make haste, takes good news when it comes, and is not uneasy while it is in the coming.

1. The messenger presents himself to David as an express, in the posture of a mourner for the deceased prince, and a subject to the succeeding one. He came with his clothes rent, and obedience to David, ver. 2. pleasing himself with the fancy that he had the honour to be the first that did him homage as a sovereign, but it proved he was the first that received from him sentence of death, as his judge. He told David he came from the camp of Israel, and intimated the bad posture it was in, when he said he was escaped out of it, having much ado to get away with his life, ver. 3.

2. He gives him a general account of the issue of the battle. David was very desirous to know how the matter went, as one that had more reasons than one to be concerned for the public, and he told him very distinctly, that the army of Israel was routed, many slain, and among the rest Saul and Jonathan, ver. 4. he names only Saul and Jonathan, because he knew David would be most solicitous to know their fate; for Saul was the man whom he most feared, and Jonathan the man whom he most loved.

3. He gives him a more particular account of the death of Saul. It is probable, David had heard, by the report of others, what the issue of the war was, for multitudes resorted to him, it should seem, upon that inducement, but he was desirous to know the certainty of the report concerning Saul and Jonathan, either because he was not forward to believe it, or because he would not proceed upon it to make his own claims, till he was fully assured of it. He therefore asks, *How knowest thou that Saul and Jonathan are dead?* In answer to which the young man tells him a very ready story, putting it past doubt that Saul was dead, for he himself had been not only an eye-witness of his death, but an instrument of it, and therefore David might rely upon his testimony. He saith nothing in his narrative of the death of Jonathan, knowing how ungrateful that would be to David, but accounts only for Saul, thinking (as David understood it well enough, chap. iv. 10.) that he would be welcome for that, and rewarded, as one that brought good tidings.

The account he gives of this matter is,

1. Very particular. That he happened by chance upon the place where Saul was, ver. 6. as a passenger, not as a soldier, and therefore an indifferent person; that he found Saul endeavouring to run himself through with his own spear, none of his attendants being willing to do it for him; and, it seems, he could not do it dexterously for himself, his hand and heart failed him, the miserable man had not courage enough either to live or die: he called this stranger to him, ver. 7. enquired what countryman he was, for, provided he were not a Philistine, he would gladly receive from his hand the *Coup de grace* (as the French call it, concerning those that are broken on the wheel) the gracious stroke; that might dispatch him out of his pain. Understanding that he was an Amalekite (neither one of his subjects, nor one of his enemies) he begs this favour from him, ver. 9. *Stand upon me, and slay me.* He is now sick of his dignity, and willing to be trampled upon; sick of his life and willing to be slain. Who then would be inordinately fond of his life or honour? The case may be such, even with those that have no hope in their death, that yet they may desire to die, and death flee from them, Rev. ix. 6. *Anguish came upon me*; so we read it; as a complaint of the pain and terror his spirit was seized with: If his conscience now brought to mind the javelin he had cast at David, his pride, malice, and perfidiousness, and especially the murder of the priests, no marvel that anguish came upon him: moles (they say) open their eyes when they are dying. Sense of unpardoned guilt will make death indeed the king of terrors. They that have bailed their convictions, will, perhaps, in their dying moments be overpowered by them. The margin reads it as a complaint of the inconvenience of his clothes; that his coat of mail, which he had for his defence, or his embroidered coat, which he had for ornament, hindered him, that he could not get the spear far enough into his body, or so straitened him, now his body swelled with anguish, that he could not expire: let no man's clothes be his pride, for it may so happen, that they may be his burden and snare. Hereupon, saith our young man, *I stood upon him, and slew him*, ver. 10. At which word, perhaps, he observed David look upon him with some shew of displeasure, and therefore he excused it, in the next words; *for I was sure he could not live*; his life was whole in him indeed, but he would certainly have fallen into the hands of the Philistines, or given himself another thrust.

2. It is doubtful whether this story be true. If it was, the righteousness of God is to be observed, that Saul, who spared the Amalekites in contempt of the divine command, received his death's wound from an Amalekite. But most interpreters think it was false, and that, though he might happen to be present, yet he was not assisting in the death of Saul, but told David so, in expectation that he would have rewarded him for it, as having done him a piece of good service. They who would sometimes rejoice at the fall of an enemy, are apt to measure others by themselves, and to think that they will do so too. But a man after God's own heart, is not to be judged of by common men. I am not clear whether this young man's story were true or no: it may conflict with the narrative in the chapter before, and be an addition to it, as Peter's account of the death of Judas, Acts i. 18. is to the narrative, Matt. xxvii. 7. What is there called a sword, may here be called a spear; or, when he fell upon his sword, he leaned on his spear.

3. However he produced that which was proof sufficient of the death of Saul, the crown that was upon his head, and the bracelet that was on his arm. It should seem these Saul was so foolishly fond of, as to wear them in the field of battle, which made him the fair mark for the archers, by distinguishing him from those about him; but as pride (we say) *feels no cold*, so it fears no danger from that which gratifies it. These fell into the hands of this Amalekite: Saul spared the best of their spoil, and now the best of his came to one of that devoted nation. He brought them to David as the rightful owner of them now Saul was dead, not doubting but by his officiousness herein, to recommend himself to the best preferments in his court or camp. The tradition of the Jews is, that this Amalekite was the son of Doeg, (for the Amalekites were descendants from Edom) and that Doeg who, they suppose, was Saul's armour-bearer before he slew himself, gave Saul's crown and bracelet (the ensigns of his royalty) to his son, and bid him carry them to David, to curry favour with him. But this is a groundless conceit, Doeg's son, it is likely, was so well known to Saul, that he needed not ask him as he did, ver. 8. *Who art thou?* David had been long waiting for the crown, and now it is brought him by an Amalekite. See how God can serve his own purposes of kindness to his own people, even by designing (ill designing) men, who aim at nothing but to set up themselves.

11. Then David took hold on his clothes, and rent them, and likewise all the men that were with him. 12.

And they mourned and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the LORD, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword. 13. ¶ And David said unto the young man that told him, Whence art thou? And he answered, I am the son of a stranger, An Amalekite. 14. And David said unto him, How, wast thou not afraid to stretch forth thine hand, to destroy the LORD's anointed? 15. And David called one of the young men, and said, Go near, and fall upon him. And he smote him that he died. 16. And David said unto him, Thy blood be upon thy head: for thy mouth hath testified against thee, saying, I have slain the LORD's anointed.

Here is, 1. David's resentment of these tidings. So far was he from falling into a transport of joy, as the Amalekite expected, that he falls into a passion of weeping, *rent his clothes*, ver. 11. *mourned and fasted*, ver. 12. not only for his people Israel, and Jonathan his friend, but for Saul his enemy. This he did not only as a gentleman, and a man of honour, in observance of that decorum which forbids us to insult over those that are fallen, and requires us to attend our relations to the grave with respect, whatever we lost by their life, or got by their death; but as a good man and a man of conscience, that had forgiven the injuries Saul had done him, and bore him no malice: He knew it before his son wrote it, Prov. xxiv. 17, 18. that if we rejoice when our enemy falls, the Lord sees it, and it displeaseth him, and he that is glad at calamities shall not go unpunished, Prov. xvii. 5. By this it appears, that those passages in David's psalms which speak his desire of triumph in the ruin of his enemies proceed not from a spirit of revenge, or any irregular passion, but from a holy zeal for the glory of God and the public good; for by what he did here when he heard of Saul's death, we may perceive that his natural temper was very tender, and that he was kindly affected even to those that hated him. He was very sincere, no question, in his mourning for Saul, and it was not pretended, nor a copy of his countenance only. His passion was so strong on this occasion, that it moved those about him, *all that were with him*, at least in compliance to him, *rent their clothes*, and they *fasted till even*, in token of their sorrow, and, probably, it was a religious fast, they humbled themselves under the hand of God, and prayed for the repairing of the breaches made upon Israel by this defeat.

2. The reward he gave to him that brought him the tidings; instead of preferring him he put him to death: judged him out of his own mouth as a murderer of his prince, and ordered him forthwith to be executed for the same. What a surprise was this to the messenger, who thought he should have a good fee given him for his pains. In vain did he plead that he had Saul's order for it, that it was a real kindness to him, that he must inevitably have died: however all those pleas are over-ruled, *thy mouth hath testified against thee, I have slain the Lord's anointed*, ver. 16. therefore thou must die.

Now, 1. David herein did not do unjustly. For, 1. The man was an Amalekite. This, lest he had mistaken it in his narrative, he made him own a second time, ver. 13. that nation and all that belonged to it were doomed to destruction, so that in slaying him David did what his predecessor should have done, and was rejected for not doing. 2. He did himself confess the crime, so that the evidence was, by the consent of all laws, sufficient to convict him; for every man is presumed to make the best of himself. If he did as he said, he deserved to die for treason, ver. 14. doing that which, it is probable, he heard Saul's own armour-bearer refuse to do; if not, yet by boasting that he had done it, he plainly shewed, that if there had been occasion he would have done it, and would have made nothing of it; and, by boasting of it to David, he shewed what opinion he had of him, that he would rejoice in it, as one altogether like himself, which was an intolerable affront to him, who had himself once and again refused to stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed. And his lying to David, if indeed it were a lie, was highly criminal, and proved, as sooner or later that sin will prove, lying against his own head.

2. He did honourably and well. Hereby he demonstrated the sincerity of his grief; discouraged all others from thinking, by doing the like, to ingratiate themselves with him; and did that which might probably oblige the house of Saul, and win upon them, and recommend him to the people, as one that was zealous for public justice, without regard to his own private interest. We may learn from it that to give assistance to any in murdering themselves, directly, or indirectly, if done wittingly, incurs the guilt of blood. And that the lives of princes ought to be in a special manner precious to us.

17. ¶ And David lamented with this lamentation over Saul, and over Jonathan his son: 18. (Also he bade them teach the children of Judah the use of the bow: behold, it is written in the book of Jathier.) 19. The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! 20. Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon: lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph. 21. Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty, is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil. 22. From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty. 23. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. 24. Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights, who put an ornament of gold upon your apparel. 25. How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle? O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. 26. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hath thou been unto me; thy love to me was wonderful, passing

passing the love of women. 27. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

When David had rent his clothes, mourned and wept, and fasted for the death of Saul, and done justice upon him who made himself guilty of it, one would think he had made full payment of that debt of honour he owed to his memory; yet this is not all; we have here a poem he wrote on that occasion; for he was a great master of his pen, as well as sword. By this elegy he designed both to express his own resentments of that great calamity, and to impress the like on the mind of others, who ought to lay it to heart. The putting of lamentations into poems, made them, 1. The more moving and affecting. The passion of the poet, or singer, is by this way wonderfully communicated to the readers and hearers. 2. The more lasting. Thus they were made, not only to spread far, but to continue long, from generation to generation. Those might gain information by poems, that would not read history.

Here is, 1. The orders David gave with his elegy, *ver. 18. He bade them teach the children of Judah (his own tribe, whatever others did) the use of the bow; either, 1. The bow used in war. Not but that the children of Judah knew how to use the bow, it was so commonly used in war, long before this, that the sword and bow were put for all weapons of war, Gen. xlviii. 22. but, perhaps, they had of late made more use of slings, as David in killing of Goliath, because cheaper; which David would have them now to see the inconvenience of, (for they were the archers of the Philistines that bore so hard upon Saul, 1 Sam. xxxi. 3.) and to return more generally to the use of the bow, to exercise themselves in this weapon, that they might be in a capacity to avenge the death of their prince upon the Philistines, and to outdo them at their own weapon. It was pity but those that had such good heads and hearts, and hands, as the children of Judah, should be well armed. David hereby shewed his authority over, and concern for, the armies of Israel, and set himself to rectify the errors of the former reign. But we find that the companies which were now come to David to Ziklag were armed with bows, 1 Chron. xii. 2. therefore, 2. Some understand it, either of some musical instrument called a bow, to which he would have the mournful ditties sung; or of the elegy itself; *he bade them teach the children of Judah Kesheth, the bow, i. e. this song which was so entitled for the sake of Jonathan's bow, the achievements of which are here celebrated. Moses commanded Israel to learn his song, Deut. xxxi. 19. to David his. Probably he bade the Levites teach them. It is written in the book of Jasher, there it was kept upon record, and from thence transcribed into this history. This book was probably, a collection of state poems: what is said to be written in that book, Josh. x. 13. is also poetical, a fragment of an historical poem. Even songs would be forgotten and lost, if they were not committed to writing, that best conservatory of knowledge.**

2. The elegy itself. It is not a divine hymn, nor given by inspiration of God, to be used in divine service; nor is there any mention of God in it; but it is a human composition, and therefore was inserted, not in the book of Psalms, which being of divine original, is preserved, but in the book of Jasher, which being only a collection of common poems, is long since lost.

This elegy speaks David to be,

1. A man of an excellent good spirit in four things.

(1.) He was very generous to Saul, his sworn enemy: he was his father-in-law, his sovereign, and the anointed of the Lord, and therefore, though he had done him a great deal of wrong, he doth not reke his revenge upon his memory when he is in his grave: but, like a good man, and a man of honour, 1. He conceals his faults; and though there was no remedy but they would appear in his history, yet they should not appear in this elegy. Charity teaches us to make the best we can of every body; and those we can say no good of, to say nothing of, especially when they are gone. *De mortuis nil nisi bonum.* We ought to deny ourselves the very satisfaction of making personal reflections upon those who have been injurious to us, much less of drawing their character from thence, as if every man must of necessity be an ill man that hath done ill by us. Let the corrupt part of the memory be buried with the corrupt part of the man, earth to earth, ashes to ashes; let the blemish be hid, and a veil drawn over the deformity. 2. He celebrates that which was praise-worthy in him. He doth not commend him for that which he was not; saith nothing of his piety, or fidelity; those funeral commendations, which are gathered out of the spoils of truth, are not at all the praise of those on whom they are bestowed, but very much the dispraise of those who unjustly misplace them. But he has this to say, in honour of Saul himself, (1.) That he was *anointed with oil*, *ver. 21.* the sacred oil, which signified his elevation to, and qualification for, the government. Whatever he was otherwise, the crown of the anointing oil of his God was upon him, as is said of the high-priest, *Lev. xxi. 12.* and on that account he was to be honoured, because God, the fountain of honour, had honoured him. (2.) That he was a man of war, a *mighty man*, *ver. 19—21.* That he had often been victorious over the enemies of Israel, and *reared them whither he would*, *1 Sam. xiv. 47.* His sword returned not empty, but satiated with blood and spoil, *ver. 22.* His disgrace and fall at last, must not make his former successes and services to be forgotten. Though his sun set under a cloud, time was when it shone bright. (3.) That take him with Jonathan, he was a man of a very agreeable temper, that recommended him to the affections of his subjects, *ver. 23. Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant.* Jonathan was always so, and Saul was so, as long as he concurred with him. Take them together, and in the pursuit of the enemy, never were men more bold, more brave, *swifter than eagles, and stronger than lions.* Observe, they that were most fierce and fiery in the camp, were no less sweet and lovely in the court: as amiable to the subject as they were formidable to the foe: a rare composition of softness and sharpness they had, which makes any man's temper very happy. It may be understood of the good harmony and dear affection, that, for the most part, was between Saul and Jonathan, they were lovely and pleasant one to another. Jonathan a dutiful son, Saul an affectionate father, and therefore dear to each other in their lives, and *in their death they were not divided*, but kept close together in the stand they made against the Philistines, and fell together in the same cause. (4.) That he had enriched his country with the spoils of conquered nations, and introduced a finer and more fashionable dres. When they had a king like the nations, they must have clothes like the nations; and herein he was in a particular manner obliging to the ladies, *ver. 24. The daughters of Israel he clothed in scarlet*, which was their delight.

(2.) He was very grateful to Jonathan his sworn friend. Besides the tears he sheds over him, and the encomiums he gives of him in common with Saul, he mentions him with some marks of distinction, *ver. 25. O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thy high places!* which, compared with *ver. 19.* intimates, that he meant him by the beauty of Israel, which he there saith was slain upon the high places. He laments Jonathan as his particular friend, *ver. 26. My brother Jonathan:* not so much because of what he

would have been to him if he had lived, very serviceable, no doubt, in his advancement to the throne, and instrumental to prevent those long struggles, which, for want of his assistance, he had with the house of Saul: had this been the only ground of his grief, it had been selfish; but he lamented him for what he had been; *very pleasant but thou wast unto me;* but that pleasantness is now over, and *I am distressed for thee.* He had reason to say, that Jonathan's love to him was wonderful, sure never was the like, for a man to love one who he knew was to take the crown over his head, and to be so faithful to his rival: this far surpassed the highest degree of conjugal affection and constancy. See here, 1. That nothing is more delightful in this world than a true friend, that is wise and good, that kindly receives and returns our affection, and is faithful to us in all our true interests. 2. That nothing is more distressful than the loss in such a friend, it is parting with a piece of one's self. It is the vanity of this world, that what is most pleasant to us, we are most liable to be distressed in. The more we love, the more we grieve.

(3.) He was deeply concerned for the honour of God; for that it is which he has an eye to, when he fears least the daughters of the uncircumcised, that are out of the covenant with God, triumph over Israel, and the God of Israel, *ver. 20.* Good men are touched in a very sensible part by the reproaches of them that reproach God.

(4.) He was deeply concerned for the public welfare. It was the beauty of Israel that was slain, *ver. 19.* and the honour of the public disgraced: the *mighty are fallen*, that is three times lamented, *ver. 19. 25. 27.* and so the strength of the people is weakened. Public losses are most laid to heart by men of public spirits. David hoped God would make him instrumental to repair those losses, and yet laments them.

2. David here shews himself to be a man of an admirable good fancy; a witty man, as well as a wise and holy man. The expressions are all very fine, and apt to work upon the passions. 1. The embargo he would lay upon fame is elegant, *ver. 20. Tell it not in Gath.* It grieved him to the heart, to think that it would be proclaimed in the cities of the Philistines, and they would insult over Israel upon it, and the more in remembrance of the triumphs of Israel over them formerly, when they sang, *Saul has slain his thousands;* that would now be retorted. 2. The curse he entails on the mountains of Gilboa, the theatre on which this tragedy was acted, *Let there be no dew upon you, nor fields of offerings*, *ver. 21.* This is a poetical strain, like that of Job. *Let the day perish wherein I was born.* Not as if David wished, that any part of the land of Israel might be barren, but to express his sorrow for the thing, he speaks with a seeming indignation at the place. Observe, (1.) How the fruitfulness of the earth depends upon heaven. The worst thing he could wish to the mountains of Gilboa was barrenness, and unprofitableness to man; those are miserable that are useless; it was the curse Christ pronounced on the fig tree, *never fruit again on thee more*, and that took effect, the fig-tree withered away: this on the mountains of Gilboa did not: but when he wished them barren, he wished there might be no rain upon them: and if the heavens be brass, the earth will soon be iron. (2.) How the fruitfulness of the earth must therefore be devoted to heaven: which is intimated in his calling the fruitful fields, *fields of offerings.* Those fruits of their land that were offered to God, were the crown of glory of it: and therefore the failure of the offerings, is the saddest consequent of the failure of the corn. See *Joel i. 9.* To want that wherewith we shall honour God, is worse than to want that wherewith we should sustain ourselves. This is the reproach David fastens upon the mountains of Gilboa, which having been stained with royal blood, thereby forfeited celestial dews. In this elegy, Saul had a more honourable interment, than that which the men of Jabesh-gilead gave him.

C H A P. II.

David had paid his due respects to the memory of Saul his prince, and Jonathan his friend, and what he did was as much his praise as theirs; he is now considering what is to be done next. Saul is dead, now therefore David arise. 1. By direction from God, he went up to Hebron, and was there anointed king, *ver. 1—4.* 2. He returned thanks to the men of Jabesh-gilead for burying Saul, *ver. 5—7.* 3. Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, is set up in opposition to him, *ver. 8—11.* 4. A warm encounter happens between David's party and Ishbosheth's, in which, (1.) Twelve of each side engaged hand to hand, and were all slain, *ver. 12—16.* (2.) Saul's party was beaten, *ver. 17.* (3.) Ishbosheth, on David's side was slain by Abner, *ver. 18—23.* (4.) Joab, at Abner's request, sounds a retreat, *ver. 24—28.* (5.) Abner makes the best of his way, *ver. 29.* and the loss on both sides is computed, *ver. 30—32.* So that here we have an account of a civil war in Israel, which, in process of time, ended in the complete settlement of David on the throne.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, after this, that David enquired of the LORD, saying, shall I go up into any of the cities of Judah? And the LORD said unto him, Go up. And David said, Whither shall I go up? And he said, Unto Hebron. 2. So David went up thither, and his two wives also, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail Nabal's wife the Carmelite. 3. And his men that were with him, did David bring up, every man with his household, and they dwelt in the cities of Hebron. 4. And the men of Judah came, and there they anointed David king over the house of Judah: and they told David, saying, That the men of Jabesh-gilead were they that buried Saul. 5. ¶ And David sent messengers unto the men of Jabesh-gilead, and said unto them, Blessed be ye of the LORD that ye have shewed this kindness unto your lord, even unto Saul, and have buried him. 6. And now the LORD shew kindness and truth unto you, and I also will requite you this kindness, because ye have done this thing. 7. Therefore now let your hands be strengthened, and be ye valiant: for your master Saul is dead, and also the house of Judah have anointed me king over them.

When

When Saul and Jonathan were dead, though David knew himself anointed to be king, and now saw his way very clear, yet he did not presently send messengers through all the coasts of Israel, to summon all the people to come in and swear allegiance to him upon pain of death, but proceeded leisurely; for he that believeth doth not make haste, but wait God's time for the accomplishment of God's promises. Many were come to his assistance from several tribes, while he continued at Ziklag, as we find, *1 Chron. xii. 1—22.* and by such a force he might have come in by conquest: but he that will rule with meekness, will not rise with violence. Observe here,

1. The direction he sought and had from God, in this critical juncture, *ver. 1.* He doubted not but to speed, yet he useth proper means, both divine and human. Assurance of hope in God's promise will be so far from slackening, that it will quicken pious endeavour. If I be elected to the crown of life, it doth not follow, that I will do nothing; but then I will do all that he directs me, and follow his conduct who chose me, that good use David made of his election, and so will all whom God has chosen. 1. David, according to the precept, *acknowledged God in his way.* He enquired of the Lord, by the breast-plate of judgment, which Abiathar brought him. We must apply ourselves to God, not only when we are in distress, but even when the world smiles upon us, and second causes begin to work in favour of us. His enquiry was, *Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?* Shall I stir hence! Though Ziklag be in ruins, he will not quit it without direction from God: if I stir hence, *Shall I go to one of the cities of Judah?* Not limiting God to them, if God should so direct him, he would go to any of the cities of Israel. But it speaks his prudence, in the cities of Judah he would find more friends; and his modesty, he would look no further at present than his own tribe. In all our motions and removes, it is comfortable to see God going before us; and we may, if by faith and prayer we set him before us. 2. God, according to the promise, directed his path, bid him go up, told him whither, unto Hebron, a priest's city, one of the cities of refuge, so it was to David, and an intimation, that God himself would be to him a little sanctuary. The sepulchres of the patriarchs adjoining to Hebron, would mind him of the ancient promise, on which God had caused him to hope. God sent them out to Beth-lehem his own city, because that was little among the thousands of Judah, *Mic. v. 2.* but to Hebron, a more considerable place, and which, perhaps, was then as the county town of that tribe.

2. The care he took of his family and friends in his remove to Hebron. 1. He took his wives with him, *ver. 2.* that as they had been companions with him in tribulation, they might be so in the kingdom. It doth not appear he had as yet any children; his first was born in Hebron, *chap. iii. 2.* 2. He took his friends and followers with him, *ver. 3.* They had accompanied him in his wanderings, and therefore when he gained a settlement, they settled with him. Thus if we suffer with Christ we shall reign with him, *2 Tim. ii. 12.* Nay, Christ doth more for his good soldiers, than David could do for his; he found lodging for them, *They dwell in the cities of Hebron,* the adjacent towns; but to those who continue with Christ in his temptations, he appoints a kingdom, and will feast them at his own table, *Luke xxii. 29, 30.*

3. The honour done him by the men of Judah; they anointed him king over the house of Judah, *ver. 4.* The tribe of Judah had often stood by itself, more than any other of the tribes; in Saul's time it was numbered by itself, as a distinct body, *1 Sam. xv. 4.* had been used to act separately; they did so now; yet they did it for themselves only; they did not pretend to anoint him king over all Israel, as *Judg. ix. 22.* but only over the house of Judah: the rest of the tribes might do as they pleased, but as for them and their house, they would be ruled by him whom God hath chosen. See how David rose gradually; he was first anointed king in reversion, than in possession, of one tribe only, and at last of all the tribes; thus the kingdom of the Messiah, the son of David, is set up by degrees: he is Lord of all, by divine designation, but we see not yet all things put under him, *Heb. ii. 8.* David's reigning at first over the house of Judah only, was a tacit intimation of providence, that his kingdom would in a short time be reduced to that again, as it was when the ten tribes revolted from his grandson; and it would be an encouragement to the godly kings of Judah, that David himself at first reigned over Judah only.

4. The respectful message he sent to the men of Jabesh-gilead, to return them thanks for their kindness to Saul. Still he studies to honour the memory of his predecessor, and thereby to shew, that he was far from aiming at the crown from any principle of ambition, or enmity to Saul, but purely because he was called of God to it. It was told him, that the men of Jabesh-gilead buried Saul, perhaps, by some that thought he would have been displeased at them as over-officious; But he was far from that, 1. He commended them for it, *ver. 5.* According as our obligations were to love and honour any while they lived, we ought to shew respect to their remains, *i. e.* their bodies, names, and families when they are dead; Saul was your lord, (saith David) and therefore you did well to shew him this kindness, and do him this honour. 2. He prays to God to bless them for it, and to recompense it to them. *Blessed are ye, and blessed may ye be of the Lord,* who will deal kindly with those in a particular manner, that deal kindly with the dead, as it is *Ruth i. 8.* Due respect and affection shewed to the bodies, names and families of those that are dead in conscience towards God, is a piece of charity, which shall in no wise lose its reward. *The Lord shew kindness and truth to you!* *ver. 6. i. e.* kindness according to the promise, what kindness God shews is in truth, is what one may trust to. 3. He promiseth to make them amends for it, *I also will requite you.* He doth not turn them over to God for a recompence, that he might excuse himself from rewarding them: good wishes are good things, and instances of gratitude; but they are too cheap to be rested in where there is an ability to do more. 4. He prudently takes this opportunity to court them into his interest, *ver. 7.* They had paid their last respects to Saul, and would have them to be the last, *The house of Judah have anointed me king,* and it will be your wisdom to concur with them, and in that to be valiant. We must not so dote on the dead, how much soever we have valued them, as to neglect or despise the blessings we have in those that survive, whom God has raised up to us in their stead.

8. ¶ But Abner the son of Ner, captain of Saul's host, took Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and brought him over to Mahanaim. 9. And made him king over Gilead, and over the Ashurites, and over Jezreel, and over Ephraim, and over Benjamin, and over all Israel. 10. Ish-bosheth Saul's son was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and reigned two years: but the house of Judah followed David. 11. (And the time that David was king in Hebron over the house of Judah, was seven years and six months.) 12. ¶ And Abner the son of Ner, and the servants of Ish-bosheth

the son of Saul, went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon. 13. And Joab the son of Zeruiah, and the servants of David went out, and met together by the pool of Gibeon: and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool. 14. And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men now arise, and play before us: and Joab said, Let them arise, 15. Then there arose and went over by number twelve of Benjamin, which pertained to Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, and twelve of the servants of David. 16. And they caught every one his fellow by the head, and thrust his sword in his fellow's side: so they fell down together: wherefore that place was called Helkath-hazzurim, which is in Gibeon. 17. And there was a very sore battle that day: and Abner was beaten, and the men of Israel, before the servants of David.

Here is, 1. A rivalry between two kings; David, whom God made king, and Ish-bosheth, whom Abner made king. One would have thought when Saul was slain, and all his sons that had sense and spirit enough to take the field with him, David should have come to the throne without any opposition, since all Israel knew not only how he had signalized himself, but how manifestly God had designed him to it; but such a spirit of contradiction is there in the devices of men, to the councils of God, that such a weak and silly thing as Ish-bosheth, who was not thought fit to go with his father to the battle, shall yet be thought fit to succeed him in the government, rather than David shall come peaceably to it. Herein David's kingdom was typical of the Messiah's, against which the heathens rage, and the rulers take counsel, *Psalm. ii. 1, 2.* (1.) Abner was the person who set up Ish-bosheth in competition with David; perhaps, in his zeal for the lineal succession? since they must have a king like the nations, in this they must be like them, that the crown must descend from father to son: Or rather in his affection to his own family and relations, (for he was Saul's uncle) and, because, he had no other way to secure to himself the post of honour he was in, as captain of the host. See how much mischief the pride and ambition of one man may be the occasion of. Ish-bosheth would never have set up himself, if Abner had not set him up, and made a tool of him to serve his own purposes. (2.) Mahanaim was the place where he first made his claim. On the other side Jordan, where it was thought David had the least interest, and being at a distance from his forces, they might have time to strengthen themselves. But having set up his standard there, the unthinking people of all the tribes of Israel, that is, the generality of them submitted to him, *ver. 9.* and Judah only was entire for David. This was a further trial of the faith of David in the promise of God, and of his patience, whether he could wait God's time for the performance of that promise. (3.) Some difficulty there is about the time of the continuance of this competition. David reigned over Judah only about seven years, *ver. 11.* and yet, *ver. 10.* Ish-bosheth reigned over Israel two years: either before those two years, or after, or both, it was in general for the house of Saul, *chap. iii. 6.* and not any particular person of that house that Abner declared. Or, these two years he reigned before the war broke out, *ver. 12.* which continued long, even the remaining five years, *chap. iii. 1.*

2. A recounter between their two armies. It doth not appear that either side brought their whole force into the field, for the slaughter was but small, *ver. 30, 31.* We may wonder, 1. That the men of Judah did not appear and act more vigorously for David, to reduce all the nation into obedience to him; but it is likely David would not suffer them to act offensively, choosing rather to wait till the thing would do itself, or rather till God would do it for him, without the effusion of Israelitish blood, for to him, as a type of Christ, that was very precious, *Psalm. lxxii. 14.* Even those that were his adversaries he looked upon as his subjects, and would treat them accordingly. 2. That the men of Israel could in a manner stand neuter, and sit down tamely under Ish-bosheth for so many years, especially considering what characters many of the tribes were at this time, as we find them, *1 Chron. xii. 23, &c.* Wise men, mighty men, men of valour, expert in war, and not of double heart, and yet for seven years together, for ought appears, most of them seemed indifferent in whose hand the public administration was. Divine providence serves its own purpose, by the stupidity of men at some times, and the activity of the same persons at other times; they unlike themselves, and yet the motions of providence uniform.

1. In this battle Abner was the aggressor. David sat still to see how the matter would fall, but the house of Saul, and Abner at the head of it, gave the challenge, and they went by the worst; therefore go not forth hastily to strive, nor be forward to begin quarrels, *lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof,* *Prov. xxv. 8.* a fool's slips and hands enter into contention.

2. The feat of war was Gibeon; Abner chose it, because it was the lot of Benjamin, where Saul had the most friends; yet since he offered battle, Joab, David's general, would not decline it, but there joined issue with him, and met him by the pool of Gibeon, *ver. 13.* David's cause being built upon God's ground, feared not the disadvantages of the ground; the pool between them gave both sides time to deliberate.

3. The engagement was at first proposed by Abner, and accepted by Joab, to be between twelve and twelve of a side. 1. It should seem this trial of skill was began in sport, Abner made the motion, *ver. 14.* Let the young men arise, and play before us, as gladiators; perhaps Saul had used his men to these barbarous pastimes, like a tyrant indeed, and Abner had learnt it of him, to make a jest of wounds and death, and divert himself with the scenes of blood and horror. He meant, let them fight before us, when he said let them play before us: fools thus make a mock at sin: But he is unworthy the name of a man, that can be thus prodigal of human blood, that can thus throw about firebrands, arrows, and death, and say, *am not I in sport?* *Prov. xxvi. 18, 19.* Joab having been bred up under David, had so much wisdom as not to make so ill a motion, and yet had not resolution enough to resist and gainstay it, when another made it. For he stood upon a point of honour, and thought it a blemish to his reputation to refuse a challenge; and therefore said, *Let them arise,* not that he was fond of the sport, or expected that the duels would be decisive, but he would not be hectoring by his antagonist; how many precious lives have thus been sacrificed to the caprices of proud men? twelve of each side were accordingly called out as champions to enter the list, a double jury of life and death, not others, but their own; and the undertakers on Abner's side seem to have been most forward, for they took the field first, *ver. 15.* having perhaps been bred up in a foolish ambition, thus to serve the humour of their commander in chief. But, 2. However it begun, it ended in blood, *ver. 16.* they thrust every man his sword into his fellow's side, spurred on by honour, not by enmity, so they fell down together, *i. e.* all the twenty-four were slain, such an equal match were one for another, and so resolute, that neither

neither side would either beg or give quarter; they did as it were by agreement (saith *Josephus*) dispatch one another with mutual wounds. They that strike at other mens lives, often throw away their own, and death only conquers and rides in triumph. The wonderful obstinacy of both sides was remembered in the name given to the place, *Helkath-hazzurim, the field of rocky men*, men that were not only strong in body, but of firm and unshaken constancy, that stirred not at the sight of death: Yet the *stout-hearted were spoiled, and slept their sleep*, *Psal. lxxvi. 5.* Poor honour for men to purchase at so vast an expence: they that lose their lives for Christ shall find them.

4. The whole army at length engaged, and Abner's forces were routed, *ver. 17.* The former was a drawn battle, in which all were killed on both sides, and therefore they must put it upon another trial, in which (as it often happens) that they gave the challenge went away with loss. David had God on his side; his side therefore was victorious.

18. ¶ And there were three sons of Zeruiah there, Joab, and Abithai, and Asahel? and Asahel was as light of foot as a wild roe. 19. And Asahel pursued after Abner; and in going he turned not to the right hand, nor to the left, from following Abner. 20. Then Abner looked behind him, and said, *Art thou Asahel?* And he answered, *I am.* 21. And Abner said to him, Turn thee aside to thy right hand, or to thy left, and lay thee hold on one of the young men, and take thee his armour. But Asahel would not turn aside from following of him. 22. And Abner said again to Asahel, Turn thee aside from following me: wherefore should I smite thee to the ground? how then should I hold up my face to Joab thy brother? 23. Howbeit, he refused to turn aside: wherefore Abner with the hinder end of the spear smote him under the fifth rib, that the spear came out behind him; and he fell down there, and died in the same place: and it came to pass, that as many as came to the place where Asahel fell down and died, stood still. 24. Joab also and Abithai pursued after Abner: and the sun went down when they were come to the hill of Ammah, that lieth before Giah by the way of the wilderness of Gibeon.

We have here the contest between Abner and Asahel: Asahel, the brother of Joab, and cousin-german of David's, was one of the principal commanders of David's forces, and was famous for swiftness in running, he was as light of foot as a wild roe, *ver. 18.* this he got the name of by swift pursuing, not swift flying: Yet we may suppose, he was not comparable to Abner for a skilful experienced soldier; we must therefore observe,

1. How rash he was in aiming to make Abner his prisoner: He pursued after him, and no other, *ver. 19.* Proud of his relation to David and Joab, his own swiftness, and the success of his party, no less a trophy of victory would now serve the young spark, than Abner himself, either slain or bound, which he thought would put an end to the war, and effectually open David's way to the throne. This made him very eager in the pursuit, and careless of the opportunities he had of seizing others in his way, on his right hand, and on his left; his eye is on Abner only. The design was brave, had he been *par negotio*: but let not the swift manglor in his swiftness, any more than the strong man in his strength, *magnis excidit ausis.*

2. How fair Abner was in giving him notice of the danger he run himself upon, and advising him not to meddle to his own hurt, *2 Chron. xxv. 19.* (1.) He bid him content himself with a lesser prey, *ver. 21. lay hold on one of the young men*, plunder him and make him thy prisoner, meddle with thy match, but pretend not to one who is so much superior to thee. It is wisdom in all contests to compare our own strength, and that of our adversaries, and to take heed of being partial to ourselves in making the comparison, lest we prove in the issue *enemies to ourselves*, *Luke xiv. 31.* (2.) He begged of him not to put him upon the necessity of slaying him in his own defence, which he was very loth to do, but must do rather than be slain by him, *ver. 22.* Abner, it seems, either loved Joab, or feared him, for he was very loth to incur his displeasure, which he would certainly do, if he slew Asahel. It is commendable for enemies to be thus respectful one to another. Abner's care how he should lift up his face to Joab, gives cause to suspect, that he really believed David would have the kingdom at last, according to the divine designation, and then, in opposing him, he acted against his conscience.

3. How fatal Asahel's wilfulness was to him. He refused to turn aside, thinking, that therefore Abner spoke him fair, because he feared him; but what came of it? Abner as soon as he came up to him, gave him his death's wound with a back stroke, *ver. 23. he smote him with the hinder end of his spear*, from which he feared no danger. This was a pass which Asahel was not acquainted with, nor had learned to stand upon his guard against, but Abner, perhaps, had formerly used it, and done execution with it; and here it did effectual execution, Asahel died immediately of the wound. See here, 1. How death often comes upon us by ways that we least suspect. Who would fear the hand of a flying enemy, or the butt-end of a spear, yet from these Asahel receives his death's wound. 2. How we are oft betrayed by the accomplishments we are proud of. Asahel's swiftness, which he presumed so much upon, did him no kindness, but forwarded his fate, and with it he run upon his death, instead of running from it. Asahel's fall was not only Abner's security from him, but put a full stop to the conqueror's pursuit, and gave Abner time to rally again; for all that came to the place stood still: only Joab and Abithai, instead of being disheartened were exasperated by it, and pursued Abner with so much the more fury, *ver. 24.* and overtook him at last about sun-set, when the approaching night would oblige them to retire.

25. ¶ And the children of Benjamin gathered themselves together after Abner, and became one troop, and stood on the top of an hill. 26. Then Abner called to Joab, and said, Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? how long shall it be then, ere thou bid the people return from following their brethren? 27. And Joab said, *As God liveth, unless thou hadst spoken, surely* No. XLVI.

then in the morning the people had gone up every one from following his brother. 28. So Joab blew a trumpet, and all the people stood still, and pursued after Israel no more, neither fought they any more. 29. And Abner and his men walked all that night through the plain, and passed over Jordan, and went through all Bithron, and they came to Mahanaim. 30. And Joab returned from following Abner: and when he had gathered all the people together, there lacked of David's servants nineteen men, and Asahel. 31. But the servants of David had smitten of Benjamin and of Abner's men, so that three hundred and threescore men died. 32. ¶ And they took up Asahel, and buried him in the sepulchre of his father, which was in Bethlehem: and Joab and his men went all night, and they came to Hebron at break of day.

Here, 1. Abner being conquered, poorly begs for a cessation of arms; he rallied the remains of his forces on the top of a hill, *ver. 25.* as if he would have made head again, but becomes a humble supplicant to Joab for a little breathing-time, *ver. 26.* He that was most forward and fond to fight, was the first that had enough of it. He that made a jest of blood-shed *ver. 14. let the young men arise, and play before us*, is now sick of it, when he finds himself on the losing hand, and the sword he made so light of drawing, threatened to touch himself. Observe how his note is changed: then it was but playing with the sword, now *shall the sword devour for ever?* It had devoured but one day, yet to him it seemed for ever, because it went against him, and very willing he is now, that the sun should not go down upon the wrath. Now he can appeal to Joab himself concerning the miserable consequences of a civil war, *knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end?* It will be reflected upon with regret, when the account comes to be made up, for whoever gets in a civil war, the community is sure to lose. Perhaps, he refers to the bitterness that was in the tribes of Israel, in the end of their war with Benjamin, when they wept for the desolations which they themselves had made, *Judg. xxi. 2.* Now he begs of Joab to found a retreat, and pleads that they were brethren, who ought not thus to bite and devour one another; he that in the morning would have Joab bid the people fall upon their brethren, now would have him bid them lay down their arms. See here, 1. How easy it is for men to use reason, when it makes for them, that would not use it if it made against them. If Abner had been conqueror, we should not have had him complaining of the voraciousness of the sword, and the miseries of a civil war, not pleading that both sides were brethren; but finding himself beaten, all these reasonings are mustered up and improved for the securing of his retreat and the saving of his scattered troops from being cut off. 2. How the issue of things alters mens minds. The same thing which looked pleasant in the morning, at night looked dismal. Those that are forward to enter into contention, will perhaps repent it before they have done with it, and therefore had better leave it off before it be meddled with, as Solomon adviseth. It is true of every sin, it were well if men would consider it in time, that it will be bitterness in the latter end. At the last it bites like a serpent those on whom it fawned.

2. Joab, though a conqueror, generously grants it, and founds a retreat, knowing very well his master's mind, and how averse he was to the shedding of blood. He doth indeed justly upbraid Abner with his forwardness to engage, and lays the blame upon him, that there had been so much blood-shed as there was, *ver. 27. Unless thou hadst spoken, i. e. hadst given orders to fight, hadst bidden the young men arise and play before us*, none of us had struck a stroke, nor drawn a sword against our brethren: Thou complainest that the sword devours, but who first unsheathed it? Who began? Now thou wouldest have the people parted, but remember who set them on to fight. We had retreated in the morning, if thou hadst not given the challenge. Those that are forward to make mischief, are commonly the first that complain of it. This might have served to excuse Joab if he had pushed on his victory, and made a full end of Abner's forces; but like one that pities the mistake of his adversaries, and learned to make an army of Israelites pay dear for the folly of their commander, he very honourably, by sound of trumpet, put a stop to the pursuit, (*ver. 28.*) and suffered Abner to make an orderly retreat. It is good husbandry to be sparing of blood. As the soldiers were here very obsequious to the general's orders, so he, no doubt, observed the instructions of his prince, who fought the welfare of all Israel, and therefore not the hurt of any.

3. The armies being separated, both retired to the places whence they came, and both marched in the night, Abner to Mahanaim, on the other side Jordan, *ver. 29.* and Joab to Hebron, where David was, *ver. 32.* The slain on both sides are computed. On David's side only nineteen men were missing, and Asahel, *ver. 30.* who was worth more than them all; on Abner's side three hundred and threescore, *ver. 31.* In civil wars formerly great slaughters had been made; as *Judg. xii. 6. xx. 44.* in comparison with which this was nothing. It was to be hoped they grew wiser and more moderate. Asahel's funeral is here mentioned, the rest they buried in the field of battle, but he was carried to Bethlehem, and buried in the sepulchre of his father, *ver. 32.* Thus are distinctions made between the dust of some and others, but in the resurrection no other difference will be made, but that between godly and ungodly, which will remain for ever.

C H A P. III.

The battle between Joab and Abner did not end the controversy between the two houses of Saul and David, but it is in this chapter working towards a period. Here is, 1. The gradual advance of David's interest, *ver. 1.* 2. The building up of his family, *ver. 2—5.* 3. Abner's quarrel with Ish-bosheth, and his treaty with David, *ver. 6—12.* 4. The preliminaries settled, *ver. 13—16.* 5. Abner's undertaking and attempt to bring Israel over to David, *ver. 17—21.* 6. The treacherous murder of Abner, by Joab, when he was carrying on this matter, *ver. 22—27.* 7. David's great concern and trouble for the death of Abner, *ver. 28—39.*

1. NOW there was long war between the house of Saul and the house of David: but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker. 2. ¶ And unto David were

sons born in Hebron: and his first-born was Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess: 3. And his second, Chileab, of Abigail, the wife of Nabal the Carmelite: and the third, Absalom, the son of Maachah, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur: 4. And the fourth, Adonijah, the son of Haggith; and the fifth, Shephatiah, the son of Abital; 5. And the sixth, Ithream, by Eglah, David's wife; these were born to David in Hebron. 6. ¶ And it came to pass while there was war between the house of Saul and the house of David, that Abner made himself strong for the house of Saul.

Here is, 1. The struggle that David had with the house of Saul, before his settlement in the throne was completed, *ver. 1.* (1.) Both sides contested; Saul's house, though beheaded and diminished, would not fall tamely. It is not strange that there was war between them, but one would wonder it should be a long war, when David's house had right on its side, and therefore God on its side; but though truth and equity will triumph at last, God may, for wise and holy ends, prolong the conflict. The length of this war tried the faith and patience of David, and made his establishment at last the more welcome to him. (2.) David's side got ground. The house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker, lost places, lost men, sunk in its reputation, and grew less considerable, went by the worse in every engagement; but the house of David grew stronger and stronger, many deserted the declining cause of Saul's house, and prudently came into David's interest, being convinced that he would certainly carry the day. The contest between grace and corruption in the hearts of believers, who are sanctified but in part, may fitly be compared to this here. There is a long war between them, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; but as the work of sanctification is carried on, corruption, like the house of Saul, grows weaker and weaker; while grace, like the house of David, grows stronger and stronger, till it comes to a perfect man, and judgment is brought forth unto victory.

2. The increase of his own house. Here is an account of six sons he had by six several wives, in the seven years he reigned in Hebron. Perhaps, this is mentioned here, as that which strengthened David's interest, every child, whose welfare was embarked in the common safety, was a fresh security given to the commonwealth for his care of it. He that has his quiver filled with these arrows, shall speak with his enemy in the gate, *Psal. cxxvii. 5.* As the death of Saul's sons weakened his interest, so the birth of David's strengthened his. 1. It was David's fault thus to multiply wives, contrary to the law, *Deut. xvii. 17.* and it was an ill example to his successors. 2. It doth not appear, that in these seven years he had above one son by each of these wives; some have had as numerous a progeny, and with much more honour and comfort, by one wife. 3. We read not that any of these sons came to be famous, but three of them infamous, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah; we have therefore reason to rejoice with trembling in the building up of our families. 4. His son by Abigail is called Chileab, *ver. 3.* whereas, *1 Chron. iii. 1.* he is called Daniel. Bishop Patrick tells the reason which the Hebrew doctors give for these names. That his first name was Daniel, God has judged me, *viz.* against Nabal; but David's enemies reproached him, and said, it was Nabal's son, and not David's; to confute which calumny, providence so ordered it, that as he grew up, he became in his countenance and features extremely like David, and resembled him more than any of his children, upon which he gave him the name of Chileab, which signifies, like his father; or, the father's picture. 5. Absalom's mother is said to be the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur, a heathen prince; perhaps, David thereby hoped to strengthen his interest, but the product of the marriage was one that proved his grief and shame. 6. The last is called David's wife, which, therefore, some think, was Michal, his first and most rightful wife, called here by another name; and though she had no child after she mocked David, she might have before.

Thus was David's house strengthened; but it was Abner that made himself strong for the house of Saul, which is mentioned, *ver. 6.* to shew that if he failed them, they would fall of course.

7. And Saul had a concubine, whose name was Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah: and Ish-bosheth said to Abner, Wherefore hast thou gone in unto my father's concubine? 8. Then was Abner very wroth for the words of Ish-bosheth, and said, Am I a dog's head, which against Judah do shew kindness this day unto the house of Saul thy father, to his brethren, and to his friends, and have not delivered thee into the hand of David, that thou chargest me to-day with a fault concerning this woman? 9. So do God to Abner, and more also, except, as the LORD hath sworn to David, even so I do to him: 10. To translate the kingdom from the house of Saul, and to set up the throne of David over Israel, and over Judah, from Dan even to Beer-sheba. 11. And he could not answer Abner a word again, because he feared him. 12. ¶ And Abner sent messengers to David on his behalf, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee. 13. ¶ And he said, Well, I will make a league with thee; but one thing I require of thee, that is, Thou shalt not see my face, except thou first bring Michal, Saul's daughter, when thou comest to see my face. 14. And David sent messengers to Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, saying, Deliver me my wife Michal, which I espoused to me for an hundred foreskins of the Philistines. 15. And Ish-bosheth sent, and took her from her husband, even from Phaltiel the son of Laish. 16. And her husband went with her along weeping behind her to Bahurim: then said Abner unto him, Go, return. And he returned. 17. ¶ And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over

you. 18. Now then do it, for the LORD hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies. 19. And Abner also spake in the ears of Benjamin; and Abner went also to speak in the ears of David in Hebron, all that seemed good to Israel, and that seemed good to the whole house of Benjamin. 20. So Abner came to David to Hebron, and twenty men with him; and David made Abner, and the men that were with him, a feast. 21. And Abner said unto David, I will arise and go, and will gather all Israel unto my lord the king, that they may make a league with thee, and that thou mayest reign over all that thine heart desireth. And David sent Abner away, and he went in peace.

Here, 1. Abner breaks with Ish-bosheth, and deserts his interest, upon a little provocation, which Ish-bosheth unadvisedly gave him. God can serve his own purposes by the sins and follies of men. 1. Ish-bosheth accused Abner of no less a crime than debauching one of his father's concubines, *ver. 7.* Whether it was so or no, doth not appear, nor what ground he had for the suspicion; but however it was, it had been Ish-bosheth's prudence to connive at it, considering how much it was his interest not to disoblige Abner. If the thing was false, and his jealousy groundless; it was very disingenuous and ungrateful, to entertain unjust surmises of one who had ventured his all for him, and was certainly the best friend he had in the world. 2. Abner resented the charge very heinously. Whether he was guilty of the fault concerning this woman, or no, he doth not say, *ver. 8.* but we suspect he was guilty, for he doth not expressly deny it; and though he was, he lets Ish-bosheth know, (1.) That he scorned to be hit in the teeth with it by him, and would not take it at his hands. What, saith Abner, *Am I a dog's head?* A vile and contemptible animal, that thou expostest me thus? *ver. 8.* Is this my recompence for the kindness I have shewn to thee and thy father's house, and the good services I have done you? He magnifies the service with this, that it was against Judah, the tribe on which the crown was settled, and which would certainly have it at last: so that in supporting the house of Saul, he acted both against his conscience, and against his interest, for which he deserved a better requital than this; and yet, perhaps, he would not have been so zealous for the house of Saul, if he had not thereby gratified his own ambition, and hoped to find his own account in it. Note, Proud men will not bear to be reprov'd, especially by those whom they think they have obliged. (2.) That he would certainly be revenged on him, *ver. 9, 10.* with the utmost degree of arrogance and insolence he lets him know, that as he had raised him up, so he could pull him down again, and would do it. He knew that God had sworn to David to give him the kingdom, and yet opposed it with all his might, from a principle of ambition, but now complies with it from a principle of revenge, under colour of some regard to the will of God, which was but a pretence. They that are slaves to their lusts, have many masters, which drive some one way, some another. and, according as they make head, men are violently hurried into self-contradictions: Abner's ambition made him zealous for Ish-bosheth, and now his revenge made him as zealous for David: if he had sincerely regarded God's promise to David, and acted with an eye to that, he had been steady and uniform in his counsels, and acted in confidence with himself. But while Abner serves his own lusts, God, by him, serves his own purposes, makes even his wrath and revenge to praise him, and ordains strength to David by it. Lastly, See how Ish-bosheth was thunder-struck by Abner's insolence; he could not answer him again, *ver. 11.* If Ish-bosheth had had the spirit of a man, especially of a prince, he might have answered him, that his merits were the aggravation of his crimes; that he would not be served by so ill a man, and doubted not but to do well enough without him. But he was conscious to himself of his own weakness, and therefore said not a word, lest he should make ill worse. His heart failed him, and he now became, as David had foretold, concerning his enemies, like a bowing wall, and a tottering fence, *Psal. lxxii. 3.*

2. Abner treats with David. One would think he began to grow sick of Ish-bosheth's cause, and sought an opportunity to desert, or else however he might threaten Ish-bosheth with it, for the quashing of his charge against him, he would not have made good his angry words so soon as he did, *ver. 12.* He sent messengers to David, to tell him that he was at his service. Whose is the land? Is it not thine? for thou hast the best title to the government, and the best interest in the people's affections. Note, God can find out ways to make those serviceable to the kingdom of Christ, who have yet no sincere affection for it, and who have vigorously set themselves against it. Enemies are sometimes made a footstool, not only to be trodden upon, but to ascend by. The earth helped the woman.

3. David enters into a treaty with Abner, but upon condition that he procure him the restitution of Michal his wife, *ver. 13.* Hereby, 1. David shewed the sincerity of his conjugal affection to his first and most rightful wife, neither her marrying another, nor his, had alienated him from her; many waters could not quench that love. 2. He testified his respect to the house of Saul: so far was he from trampling upon it, now it was fallen, that, even in his elevation, he valued himself not a little by his relation to it. He cannot be pleased with the honours of the throne, unless he have Michal, Saul's daughter, to share with him in them; so far was he from bearing any malice to the family of his enemy. Abner sent him word, that he must apply himself to Ish-bosheth, which he did, *ver. 14.* pleading that he had purchased her at a dear rate, and she was wrongfully taken from him; Ish-bosheth durst not deny his demand, now he wanted Abner to stand by him, but took her from Phaltiel, to whom Saul had married her, *ver. 15.* and Abner conducted her to David, not doubting, but that then he should be doubly welcome, when he brought him a wife in one hand, and a crown in the other. Her latter husband was loth to part with her, and followed her weeping, *ver. 16.* but there was no remedy, he must thank himself; for when he took her, he knew that another had a right to her. Usurpers must expect to resign. Let no man therefore set his heart on that which he is not intitled to. If any disagreement hath separated husband and wife, as they expect the blessing of God, let them be reconciled and come together again; let all former quarrels be forgotten, and let them live together in love, according to God's holy ordinance.

4. Abner sets his interest with the elders of Israel, to bring them over to David; knowing that which way they went, the common people would follow of course. Now it serves his own turn, he can plead in David's behalf, that he was, 1. Israel's choice, *ver. 17.* Ye sought for him in times past to be king over you; when he had signalized himself in so many engagements with the Philistines, and done you so much good service, no man can pre-

tend to greater personal merit than David, nor to less than Ish-bosheth, you have tried them both, *Detur digniori*: Let David be your king. 2. God's choice, *ver. 18. The Lord hath spoken of David.* Compare, *ver. 9.* When God appointed Samuel to anoint him, he did, in effect, promise that by his hand he would save Israel; for, for that end he was made king, God having promised, by David's hand to save Israel: it is both your duty, in compliance with God's will, and your interest, in order to your victories over your enemies, to submit to him: and it is the greatest folly in the world to oppose him. Who would have expected such reasonings as these out of Abner's mouth? But thus God will make the enemies of his people to know, and own that *he has loved them*, Rev. iii. 9. He particularly applied himself to the men of Benjamin, those of his own tribe, on whom he had the greatest influence, and whom he had drawn in to appear for the house of Saul: he was the man that had deceived them, and therefore he was concerned to undeceive them. Thus the multitude are as they are managed.

5. David concludes the treaty with Abner; and he did wisely and well therein; for whatever induced Abner to it, it was a good work to put an end to the war, and to settle the Lord's anointed on the throne; and it was as lawful for David to make use of his agency, as it is for a poor man to receive an alms from a Pharisee, who gives it in pride and hypocrisy. Abner reported to David the sense of the people, and the success of his communications with them, *ver. 19.* He came now, not as at first, incognito, but with a retinue of twenty men, and David entertained them with a feast, *ver. 20.* in token of reconciliation and joy; and as a pledge of the agreement between them; it was a feast upon a covenant, like that, *Gen. xxvi. 30.* *If thine enemy hunger, feed him; but if he submit, feast him.* Abner, pleased with his entertainment, the prevention of his fall with Saul's house, (which would have been inevitable, if he had not taken this course) and much more with the prospect he had of preferment under David, undertakes, in a little time, to perfect the revolution; and to bring all Israel into obedience to David, *ver. 21.* He tells David that he shall reign over all that his heart desired. He knew David's elevation took rise from God's appointment, yet he insinuates that it sprung from his own ambition and desire of rule; thus (as bad men often do) he measured that good man by himself. However, David and he parted very good friends, and the affair between them in a very good posture.

22. ¶ And behold, the servants of David and Joab came from pursuing a troop, and brought in a great spoil with them: but (Abner was not with David in Hebron, for he had sent him away, and he was gone in peace.) 23. When Joab and all the host that was with him were come, they told Joab, saying, Abner the son of Ner came to the king, and he hath sent him away, and he is gone in peace. 24. Then Joab came to the king, and said, What hast thou done? behold, Abner came unto thee, why is it that thou hast sent him away, and he is quite gone? 25. Thou knowest Abner the son of Ner, that he came to deceive thee, and to know thy going out, and thy coming in; and to know all that thou doest. 26. And when Joab was came out from David, he sent messengers after Abner, which brought him again from the well of Sirah: but David knew it not. 27. And when Abner was returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside in the gate, to speak with him quietly: and smote him there under the fifth rib, that he died, for the blood of Asahel his brother. 28. ¶ And afterwards when David heard it, he said, I and my kingdom are guiltless before the LORD for ever, from the blood of Abner the son of Ner: 29. Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house, and let there not fail from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on a sword, or that lacketh bread. 30. So Joab and Abishai his brother slew Abner, because he had slain their brother Asahel at Gibcon in the battle. 31. ¶ And David said to Joab, and to all the people that were with him, Rend your clothes, and gird you with sackcloth, and mourn before Abner. And king David himself followed the bier. 32. And they buried Abner in Hebron: and the king lifted up his voice, and wept at the grave of Abner; and all the people wept. 33. And the king lamented over Abner, and said, Died Abner as a fool dieth? 34. Thy hands were not bound, nor thy feet put into fetters: as a man falleth before wicked men, so sellest thou. And all the people wept again over him. 35. And when all the people came to cause David to eat meat, while it was yet day, David sware, saying, So do God to me, and more also, if I taste bread, or ought else, till the sun be down. 36. And all the people took notice of it, and it pleased them: as whatsoever the king did pleased all the people. 37. For all the people, and all Israel understood that day, that it was not of the king to slay Abner the son of Ner. 38. And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not that there is a prince, and a great man fallen this day in Israel? 39. And I am this day weak, though anointed king, and these men the sons of Zeruiab be too hard for me: the LORD shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness.

We have here an account of the murder of Abner by Joab, and David's deep repentment of it.

1. Joab very insolently fell foul upon David for treating with Abner. It happened he was abroad upon service when Abner was with David, pursuing a troop, either of Philistines, or of Saul's party; but, upon his return, was informed that Abner was just gone, *ver. 22, 23.* and that a great many kind things had passed between David and him. He had all the reason in the world to be satisfied of David's prudence, and to acquiesce in the measures he took, knowing him to be a wise and good man himself, and under a divine conduct in all his affairs: and yet, as if he had the same way in David's cause, that Abner had in Ish-bosheth's, he chides David and reproaches him to his face, as impolitic, *ver. 24, 25.* *What hast thou done?* As if David were accountable to him for what he did: *Why hast thou sent him away?* When thou mightest have made him a prisoner? He came as a spy, and will certainly betray thee. I know not whether to wonder more, that Joab had impudence enough to give such an affront to his prince, or that David had patience enough to take it. He doth, in effect, call David a fool, when he tells him he knew Abner came to deceive him, and yet he trusted him. We find no answer that David gave him, not because he feared him, as Ish-bosheth did Abner, *ver. 11.* but because he despised him; or because Joab had not so much good manners as to stay for an answer.

2. He very treacherously sent for Abner back, and, under colour of a private conference with him, barbarously killed him with his own hand. That he made use of David's name, under pretence of giving him some further instructions, is intimated in that, but *David knew it not*, *ver. 26.* Abner, designing no harm, feared none, but very innocently returned to Hebron, and when he found Joab waiting for him in the gate, turned aside with him to speak with him privately, forgetting what he himself had said, when he slew Asahel, *How shall I hold up my face to Joab thy brother?* chap. iii. 22. and there Joab murdered him, *ver. 27.* and it is intimated, *ver. 30.* that Abishai was privy to the design, and was aiding and abetting, and would have come in to his brother's assistance; if there had been occasion; he is therefore charged as an accessory; *Joab and Abishai slew Abner*, though perhaps he only knew it who is privy to the thoughts and intents of men's hearts.

Now in this, 1. It is certain the Lord was righteous: Abner had maliciously, and against the convictions of his conscience, opposed David; he had now basely deserted Ish-bosheth, and betrayed him, under pretence of regard to God and Israel, but really from a principle of pride and revenge, and impatience of control; God will not therefore use so ill a man, though David might, in so good a work, as the uniting of Israel. Judgments are prepared for such scorners as Abner was. But, 2. It is as certain that Joab was unrighteous, and, in what he did, did wickedly: David was a man after God's heart, but could not have those about him, no not in places of the greatest trust, after his own heart. Many a good prince, and a good master, has been forced to employ bad men.

1. Even the pretence of doing this was very unjust. Abner had indeed slain his brother Asahel, and Joab and Abishai pretended herein to be avengers of his blood, *ver. 27—30.* but Abner slew Asahel in an open war, wherein Abner indeed had given the challenge, but Joab himself had accepted it, and had slain many of Abner's friends; he did it likewise in his own defence, and not till he had given him fair warning, which he would not take, and he did it with reluctance; but Joab here shed the blood of war in peace, 1 Kings ii. 3. 2. That which we have reason to think was at the bottom of Joab's enmity to Abner, made it much worse. Joab was now general of David's forces, but if Abner should come into his interest, he would possibly be preferred before him, being a senior officer, and more experienced in the art of war. This Joab was jealous of, and could better bear the guilt of blood, than the thoughts of a rival. 3. He did it treacherously, and under pretence of speaking peaceably to him, *Deut. xxvii. 24.* Had he challenged him, he had done like a soldier, but to assassinate him, was done villainously, and like a coward. *His words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords*, Psalm lv. 21. Thus he basely slew Amasa, chap. xx. 9. 4. The doing of it was a great affront and injury to David, who was now in treaty with Abner, and Joab knew it. Abner was now actually in his master's service, so that, through his side, he struck at David himself. 5. It was a great aggravation of the murder that he did it in the gate, openly and avowedly, as one that was not ashamed, nor could blush. The gate was the place of judgment, and the place of concourse; so that he did it in defiance of justice, both the just sentence of the magistrates, and the just resentments of the crown: as one that neither feared God, nor regarded man, but thought himself above all control; and Hebron was a Levite's city, and a city of refuge.

3. David laid it mightily to heart, and many ways expressed his detestation of this execrable villainy.

1. He washed his hands from the guilt of Abner's blood. Left any should suspect that Joab had some secret intimation from David to do as he did, and the rather, because he went so long unpunished, he here solemnly appeals to God concerning his innocency: *I and my kingdom are guiltless* (and my kingdom is so because I am so) *before the Lord for ever*, *ver. 28.* it is a comfort to be able to say, when any ill thing is done, that we had no hand in it. *We have not shed his blood*, *Deut. xxi. 7.* However we may be censured or suspected, *our hearts shall not reproach us.*

2. He intailed the curse for it upon Joab and his family, *ver. 28.* let it rest on the head of Joab, let the blood cry against him, and let divine vengeance follow him. Let the iniquity be visited upon his children, and children's children, in some hereditary disease or other. The longer the punishment is delayed, the longer let it fall when it doth come. Let his posterity be stigmatized, blemished with an issue or a leprosy, which will shut them out from society, let them be beggars, or cripples, or come to some untimely end, that it may be said, here is one of Joab's race. This intimates that the guilt of blood brings a curse upon families; if men do not avenge it, God will; and will lay up the iniquity for their children. But, methinks, a resolute punishment of the murderer himself would better have become David, than this passionate imprecation of God's judgments upon his posterity.

3. He called upon all about him, even Joab himself, to lament the death of Abner, *ver. 31.* *Rend your clothes and mourn before Abner*, i. e. before the bier of Abner, as Abraham is said to mourn before his dead, *Gen. xxiii. 2, 3.* and he gives a reason why they should attend his funeral with sincere and solemn mourning, *ver. 32.* because there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel. His alliance to Saul, his place as general, his interest, and the great services he had formerly done, were enough to denominate him a prince and a great man. When he could not call him a saint and a good man, he said nothing of that, but what was true he gave him the praise of, though he had been his enemy, that he was a prince and a great man, such a man fallen in Israel, and fallen this day, just when he was doing the best deed he ever did in his life: This day, when he was likely to be so serviceable to the public peace and welfare, and could so ill be spared.

1. Let them lament it. The humbling change death puts all men under is to be lamented, especially princes and great men. Alas, alas, (allude

Rev.

Rev. xviii. 10.) how mean, how little are they made by death, who made themselves the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. But we are especially obliged to lament the fall of useful men in the midst of their usefulness, and when there is most need of them. A public loss must be every man's grief, for every man shares in it. Thus David took care that honour should be done to the memory of every man of merit, to animate others.

2. Let Joab, in a particular manner, lament it, which he has less heart, but more reason to do than any of them. If he could be brought to do it sincerely, it would be an expression of repentance for his sin in slaying him: If he did it in shew only, as it is likely he did, yet it was a sort of penance imposed upon him, and a present commutation of the punishment. If he do not as yet expiate the murder with his blood, let him do something towards it with tears. This, perhaps, Joab submitted to with no great reluctance, now he had gained his point. Now he is on the bier, no matter in what pomp he lies there. *Sit divus, modo non sit vivus.*

4. David himself followed the corps as chief mourner, and made a funeral oration at the grave. He attended the bier, ver. 31, and wept at the grave, ver. 32. Though Abner had been his enemy, and might possibly have proved no fast friend, yet because he had been a man of bravery in the field, and might have done service in the public councils at this critical juncture, all former quarrels are forgotten, and David is a true mourner for his fall. What he said over the grave fetched fresh floods of tears from the eyes of all that were present, when they thought they had already paid the debt in full, ver. 33, 34. *Died Abner as a fool dies?* 1. He speaks as one vexed that Abner was fooled out of his life; that to great a man as he, so famed for conduct and courage, should be imposed upon by a colour of friendship, slain by surprise, and so die as a fool dies. The wisest and stoutest of men have no fence against treachery. To see Abner, who thought himself the main hinge on which the great affairs of Israel turned, so considerable in himself to be able to turn the scale of a trembling government, his head full of great projects and great prospects, to see him made a fool of by a base rival, and falling on a sudden a sacrifice to his ambition and jealousy, this stains the pride of all glory, and would put one out of conceit with worldly grandeur; *Put not your trust in princes*, Psalm cxlvi. 3. 4. And let us therefore make that sure which we cannot be fooled out of. A man may have his life and all that is dear to him taken from him, and not be able to prevent it with all his wisdom, care, and integrity, but there is that which no thief can break through to steal. See here how much we are beholden to God's providence more than to our own prudence, for the continuance of our lives and comforts: Were it not for the hold God has of the consciences of bad men, how soon would the weak and innocent become an easy prey to the strong and merciless, and the wisest die as fools! Or, 2. He speaks as one boasting that Abner did not fool himself out of his life: *Died Abner as a fool dies?* No, he did not, not as a criminal, a traitor or felon, that forfeits his life into the hands of public justice, his hands were not pinioned, or his feet fettered, as those of malefactors are; Abner falls not before just men, by a judicial sentence, but as a man, an innocent man, *fallen before wicked men*, thieves and robbers, so fellest thou. *Died Abner as Nabal died?* So the seventy read it. Nabal died as he lived, like himself, like a sot; but Abner's fate was such as might have been the fate of the wisest and best man in the world. Abner did not throw away his life as Ahab did, who wilfully run upon the spear after fair warning, but was struck by surprise. Note, It is a sad thing to die like a fool, as they do that any way shorten their own days, and much more they that make no provision for another world.

5. He fasted all that day, and would by no means be persuaded to eat any thing till night, ver. 35. this was then the usage of great mourners, to refrain for the time from bodily refreshments, as chap. i. 12. 1 Sam. xxxii. 13. How incongruous is it then to turn the house of mourning into a house of feasting? This respect which David paid to Abner was very pleasing to the people, and satisfied them that he was not in the least accessory to the murder, (ver. 36, 37.) which he was so solicitous to give all possible proof of, lest Joab's villainy should have made him odious, as that of Simeon and Levi did Jacob, Gen. xxxiv. 30. On this occasion it is said, that whatever the king did pleased all the people. Which speaks, 1. His good affection to them, he studied to please them in every thing, and carefully avoided what might be disobliging. 2. Their good opinion of him; they thought every thing he did well done; such a mutual willingness to please and easiness to be pleased will make every relation comfortable.

6. He bewailed it that he could not with safety do justice on the murderers, ver. 39. he was weak, his kingdom newly planted, and a little shake would overthrow it, Joab's family had a great interest, were bold and daring, and to make them his enemies now might be of ill consequence. These sons of Zeruiah were too hard for him, too big for the law to take hold of, and therefore, though by man, by the magistrate, the blood of a murderer should be shed, Gen. ix. 6. David bears the sword in vain, and contents himself as a private person, to leave them to the judgment of God, *the Lord shall reward the doer of evil according to his wickedness*. Now this is a diminution, 1. To David's greatness: he is anointed king, and yet is kept in awe by his own subjects, and some of them are too hard for him. Who would be fond of power when a man may have the name of it, and must be accountable for it, and yet be hampered in the use of it? 2. To David's goodness. He ought to have done his duty, and trusted God with the issue. *Fiat justitia, runt cælum*. If the law had had its course against Joab, perhaps the murderer of Ish-bosheth, Amnon, and others had been prevented. It was carnal policy and cruel pity that spared Joab. Righteousness supports the throne, and will never shake it. Yet it was only a reprieve David gave to Joab; on his death, bed he left it to Solomon, (who could the better wield the sword of justice, because he had no occasion to draw the sword of war) to avenge the blood of Abner. Evil pursues sinners, and will overtake them at last. David preferred Abner's son Jaasiel, 1 Chron. xxvii. 21.

C H A P. IV.

When Abner was slain, David was at a loss for a friend to perfect the reduction of those tribes that were not yet in Ish-bosheth's interest; which way to think it should be done he could not tell; but here providence brings it about by the removal of Ish-bosheth.

(1.) Two of his own servants slew him, and brought his head to David, ver. 1—8. (2.) David instead of rewarding them, put them to death for what they had done, ver. 9—12.

1. **A**ND when Saul's son heard that Abner was dead in Hebron, his hands were feeble, and all the Israelites were troubled. 2. And Saul's son had two men that were captains of bands; the name of the one was Baanah, and the name of the other Rechab, the sons

of Rimmon a Beerothite, of the children of Benjamin: (for Beeroth also was reckoned to Benjamin; 3. And the Beerothites fled to Gittaim, and were sojourners there until this day. 4. And Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up, and fled: and it came to pass as she made haste to flee, that he fell, and became lame; and his name was Mephibosheth. 5. And the sons of Rimmon the Beerothites, Recab and Baanah, went, and came about the heat of the day to the house of Ish-bosheth, who lay on a bed at noon. 6. And they came thither into the midst of the house, as though they would have fetched wheat; and they smote him under the fifth rib; and Rechab and Baanah his brother escaped. 7. For when they came into the house, he lay on his bed in his bed-chamber, and they smote him, and slew him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and gat them away through the plain all night. 8. And they brought the head of Ish-bosheth unto David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold the head of Ish-bosheth the son of Saul, thine enemy, which sought thy life; and the LORD hath avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.

Here is, 1. The weakness of Saul's house; still it went weaker and weaker. 1. As for Ish-bosheth that was in possession of the throne, his hands were feeble, ver. 1. all the strength they ever had was from Abner's support, and now he was dead, he had no spirit left in him. Though Abner had in a passion deserted his interest, yet he hoped by his means to have made good terms with David, but now even that hope fails him, and he sees himself forsaken by his friends, and at the mercy of his enemies. All the Israelites that adhered to him were troubled, and at a loss what to do, whether to proceed in their treaty with David or no. 2. As for Mephibosheth, that in the right of his father Jonathan had a prior title, his feet were lame, and he was unfit for any service, ver. 4. He was but five years old when his father and grandfather were killed; his nurse hearing of the Philistines victory, was apprehensive that in pursuit of it, they would immediately send a party to Saul's house, to cut off all that pertained to that, and would especially aim at her young master, who was now next heir to the crown: Under the apprehension of this she fled with the child in her arms, to secure it either in some secret place where he could not be found, or in some strange place where he could not be come at; and, making more haste than good speed, she fell with the child, and by the fall some bone was broke or put out and not well set, so that he was lame of it as long as he lived, and unfit either for court or camp. See what ill accidents children are liable to in their infancy, the effect of which may stick by them to their great uneasiness all their days: even the children of princes and great men, the children of good men, for such a one Jonathan was, children that are well tended, and have nurses of their own to take care of them, yet are not always safe. What reason have we be thankful to God, for the preservation of our limbs and senses to us, through the many perils of the weak and helpless state of infancy, and to own his goodness in giving his angels a charge concerning us, to bear us up in their arms, out of which there is no danger of falling, Psal. xci. 12.

2. The murder of Saul's son: we are here told,

1. Who were the murderers, Baanah and Rechab, ver. 2, 3. They were own brothers, as Simeon and Levi, and partners in iniquity: They were, or had been Ish-bosheth's own servants, employed under him, the more base and treacherous it was in them to do him a mischief. They were Benjamites of his own tribe. They were of the city of Beeroth; for some reason which we cannot now account for, care is here taken to let us know in a parenthesis that that city belonged to the lot of Benjamin, so we find, Josh. xviii. 25. but that the inhabitants, upon some occasion or other, perhaps upon the death of Saul, retired to Gittaim, another city which lay not far off in the same tribe, but better fortified by nature, being situate, (if we may depend upon Mr. Fuller's map) between the two rocks Bozez and Senneh; there the Beerothites were when this was written, and probably took root there, and never returned to Beeroth again, which made Beeroth that had been one of the cities of the Gibeonites (Josh. ix. 17.) to be forgotten, and Gittaim to be famous long after, as we find, Neh. x. 33.

2. How the murder was committed, ver. 5, 6, 7. see here, 1. The slothfulness of Ish-bosheth. He lay upon his bed at noon; it doth not appear that the country was at any time of the year so hot, as to oblige the inhabitants to retire at noon, as we are told they do in Spain in the heat of summer; but Ish-bosheth was a sluggish man, loved his ease, and hated business: and when he should have been at this critical juncture at the head of his forces in the field, or at the head of his councils in a treaty with David, he was lying upon his bed, and sleeping, for his hands were feeble, ver. 1. and so were his head and heart. When those difficulties disanimate us, which should rather invigorate us and sharpen our endeavours, we betray both our crowns and lives. *Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty and ruin*: The idle soul is an easy prey to the destroyer. 2. The treachery of Baanah and Rechab. They came into the house, under pretence of fetching wheat for the victualing of their regiments, and such was the plainness of those times, that the king's corn-chamber and his bed-chamber lay near together, which gave them an opportunity, when they were fetching wheat, to murder him as he lay on the bed. We know not when and where death will meet us, nor when we lay down to sleep, can we be sure but that we may sleep the sleep of death before we wake. Nor do we know from what unsuspected hand a fatal stroke may come. Ish-bosheth's own men that should have protected his life took it away.

3. The murderers triumph in what they had done. As if they had performed some very glorious action, and the doing it for David's advantage was enough not only to justify it, but to sanctify it, they make a present of Ish-bosheth's head to David, ver. 8. Behold the head of thine enemy, than which they thought nothing could be more acceptable to him: yea, and they make themselves instruments of God's justice, ministers to hear his sword though they had no commission, *the Lord hath avenged thee this day of Saul and of his seed*. Not that they had any regard either to God, or David's honour, they aimed at nothing but to make their own fortunes (as we say) and to get preferment in David's court: but to ingratiate themselves with him, they pretend a concern for his life, a conviction of his title, and a zealous desire to see him in full possession of the throne. Jehu pretended

as for the Lord of hosts, when an ambition to set up himself and his own family was the spring of his actions.

9. ¶ And David answered Rechab and Baanah his brother, the sons of Rimmon the Beerothite, and said unto them, As the LORD liveth, who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity, 10. When one told me, saying, Behold, Saul is dead (thinking to have brought good tidings) I took hold of him, and slew him in Ziklag, who *thought* that I would have given him a reward for his tidings: 11. How much more, when wicked men have slain a righteous person, in his own house, upon his bed? Shall I not therefore now require his blood of your hand, and take you away from the earth? 12. And David commanded his young men, and they slew them, and cut off their hands and their feet, and hanged them up over the pool in Hebron: but they took the head of Ish-bosheth, and buried it in the sepulchre of Abner, in Hebron.

We have here justice done upon the murderers of Ish-bosheth. 1. Sentence past upon them. There needed no evidence, their own tongues witnessed against them, and were so far from denying the fact, that they gloried in it; David therefore shews them the heinousness of the crime, and that blood called for blood from his hand, who was now the chief magistrate, and was, by office, the avenger of blood: And, perhaps, he was the more vigorous in the prosecution, because, for reasons of state, he had spared Joab. *Shall I not require the blood of the slain at the hand of the slayers*, and since they cannot make restitution, take theirs instead of it? Observe, (1.) How he aggravates the crime, ver. 11. Ish-bosheth was a righteous person, he had done them no wrong, nor designed them any; as to himself, David was satisfied that what opposition he gave him, was not from malice, but mistake, from an apprehension he had of his own title to the crown, and the influence of others upon him, who urged him to put in for it: Note, charity teaches us to make the best, not only of our friends, but of our enemies, and to think those may be righteous persons, who yet in some instances do us wrong. I must not presently judge a man an ill man, because I think him so to me. David owns Ish-bosheth an honest man, though he had created him a deal of trouble unjustly. The manner of it much aggravated the crime: To slay him in his own house, which should have been his castle, and upon his bed, when he was in no capacity of making any opposition; this treacherous and barbarous, and all that is base, and that which every man's heart will rise with indignation at the thought of, that is not perfectly lost to all honour and humanity. Assassination is confessedly the most odious and villainous way of murdering. *Cursed is he that smiteth his neighbour secretly.* (2.) He quotes a precedent, ver. 10. he had put him to death, that had brought him the tidings of the death of Saul, because he thought it would be good tidings to David. Nothing is here said of that Amalekite's helping Saul to kill himself, only of his bringing the tidings of it: By which it should seem, that the story he told, was upon enquiry, found to be false, and that he lied against his own head. Now, (saith David) did I treat him as a criminal, and not a favourite, (as he expected) who brought me Saul's crown, and shall they be held guiltless that bring me Ish-bosheth's head? (3.) He ratifies the sentence with an oath, ver. 9. *As the Lord liveth who hath redeemed my soul out of all adversity.* He expresseth himself thus resolutely, to prevent the making of any intercession for the criminals by those about him: And thus piously to intimate, that his dependance was upon God for the putting of him in possession of the promised throne, and that he would not be beholden to any man to help him towards it, by any indirect or unlawful practices. God had redeemed him from all adversity hitherto, helped him over many a difficulty, and through many a danger, and therefore he would depend upon him to crown and complete his own work. He speaks of his redemption from all adversity, as a thing done, though he had many a storm yet before him, because he knew he that had delivered would deliver. Hereupon he signs a warrant for the execution of these men, ver. 12. This may seem severe, when they intended him a kindness in what they did; but, 1. He would thus shew his detestation of the villainy. When he heard that the lord smote Nabal, he gave thanks, 1 Sam. xxv. 38, 39. for he is the God to whom vengeance belongeth; but if wicked men smite Ish-bosheth, they deserve to die for taking God's work out of his hand.

2. He would thus shew his resentment of the great affront they put upon him, in expecting that he should patronize and reward it; they could scarce have done him a greater injury, than thus to think him altogether such a one as themselves; one that cared not what blood he waded through to the crown.

2. Execution done. The murderers were put to death according to law, and their hands and feet were hung up; not their whole bodies, the law forbade that; but only their hands and feet, in *terrorem*, to frighten others, and to be monuments of David's justice, and make that to be taken notice of, which would recommend him to the esteem of the people, as a man fit to rule, and that aimed not at his own preferment, nor had any enmity to the house of Saul, but only and sincerely designed the public welfare. But what a confusion was this to the two murderers! What a horrid disappointment! And such they will meet with who think to serve the interests of the son of David, by any immoral practices, by war and persecution, fraud and rapine; that under colour of religion murder princes, break solemn contracts, lay countries waste, hate their brethren, cast them out, and say, *Let the Lord be glorified: kill them, and think they do God good service*; however men may canonize such methods of serving the church and the catholic cause, Christ will let them know another day, that christianity was not intended to destroy humanity; and they, who thus think to merit heaven, shall not escape the damnation of hell.

C H A P. V.

How far Abner's deserting the house of Saul, his murder, and the murder of Ish-bosheth, might contribute to the perfecting of the revolution, and the establishment of David king over all Israel, doth not appear; but, it should seem, that happy change followed presently thereupon, which in this chapter we have an account of. Here is, 1. David anointed king by all the tribes, ver. 1—5. 2. Making himself master of the strong hold of Zion, ver. 6—10. 3. Building himself a house, and strengthening himself in his kingdom, ver. 11, 12. 4. His children that were

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born after this, ver. 13—16. 5. His victories over the Philistines, ver. 17—25.

1. THEN came all the tribes of Israel to David unto Hebron, and spake, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. 2. Also in time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD said to thee; Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be a captain over Israel. 3. So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron, and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the LORD: and they anointed David king over Israel. 4. ¶ David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. 5. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah.

Here is, 1. The humble address of all the tribes to David, beseeching him to take upon him the government, for they were now as sheep having no shepherd, and owning him for their king. Though David might by no means approve the murder of Ish-bosheth, yet he might improve the advantages gained thereby, and accept the applications made to him thereupon. Judah had submitted to David as their king, above seven years ago, and their ease and happiness under his administration; encouraged the rest of the tribe to make their court to him. What numbers came from each tribe, with what zeal and sincerity they came, and how they were entertained for three days at Hebron, when they were all of one heart to make David king, we have a full account, 1 Chron. xii. 23—40. Here we have only the heads of their address, containing the grounds they went upon in making David king. 1. The relation to him was some inducement. *We are thy bone and thy flesh*, ver. 1. not only thou art our bone, and our flesh, not a stranger, unqualified by the law to be king, Deut. xvii. 15. but we are thine, i. e. we know that thou considerest us thy bone and thy flesh, and hast a tender concern for us, as a man has for his own body, which Saul and his house had not. *We are thy bone and thy flesh*, and therefore thou wilt be as glad as we shall be to put an end to this long civil war; and thou wilt take pity on us, protect us, and do thine utmost for our welfare. Those who take Christ for their king, may thus plead with him, *we are thy bone and thy flesh*, thou hast made thyself in all things like unto thy brethren, Heb. ii. 17. therefore be thou our ruler, and let this ruin be under thy hand, 1 Pet. iii. 6. 2. His former good services to the public were a further inducement, ver. 2. *When Saul was king*, he was but the cypher, thou wast the figure, *thou wast he that leddest out Israel to battle*, and broughtest him in in triumph; and therefore who so fit now to fill the vacant throne? He that is faithful in a little, deserves to be intrusted with more. Former good offices done for us should be gratefully remembered by us, when there is occasion. 3. The divine appointment and designation was the greatest inducement of all. *The Lord said, Thou shalt feed my people Israel*, i. e. thou shalt rule them; for princes are to feed their people as shepherds, in every thing consulting the subjects benefit, feeding them, and not fleecing them. And thou shalt be not only a king to govern in peace, but a captain to preside in war, and be exposed to all the toils and perils of the camp. Since God hath said so, now at length, when need drives them to it, they are persuaded to say so too.

2. The public and solemn inauguration of David, ver. 3. A convention of the states was called, all the elders of Israel came to him; the contract was settled, the *pacta conventa* sworn to, and subscribed on both sides; he obliged himself to protect them as their judge in peace, and captain in war; and they obliged themselves to obey him; he made a league with them, to which God was a witness, it was before the Lord. Hereupon he was the third time anointed king. His advances were gradual, that his faith might be tried, and that he might gain experience. And thus his kingdom typified that of the Messiah, which was to come to its height by degrees; for *we see not yet all things put under him*, Heb. ii. 8. but we shall see it, 1 Cor. xv. 25.

3. A general account of his reign and age. He was thirty years old when he began to reign, upon the death of Saul, ver. 4. at that age the Levites were at first appointed to begin their administration, Numb. iv. 3. About that age the son of David entered upon his public ministry, Luke iii. 23. Then men come to their full maturity of strength and judgment. He reigned in all forty years and six months, of which seven years and a half in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem, ver. 5. Hebron had been famous, Josh. xiv. 15. it was a priest's city, but Jerusalem was to be more so, and to be the holy city. Great kings affected to raise cities of their own, Gen. x. 11. xxxvi. 32—35. David did so, and Jerusalem was it; the city of David. It is a name famous to the end of the Bible, Rev. xxi. where we read of a New Jerusalem.

6. ¶ And the king and his men went to Jerusalem, unto the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land: which spake unto David, saying, Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither: thinking, David cannot come in hither: 7. Nevertheless, David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David. 8. And David said on that day, Whosoever getteth up to the gutter, and smiteth the Jebusites, and the lame and the blind, that are hated of David's soul, he shall be chief and captain: wherefore they said, The blind and the lame shall not come into the house. 9. So David dwelt in the fort, and called it, The city of David; and David built round about, from Millo and inward. 10. And David went on, and grew great, and the LORD God of hosts was with him.

If Salem, the place which Melchizedec was king of, was Jerusalem, (as seems probable from Psalm lxxvi. 2.) it was famous in Abraham's time; Joshua, in his time, found it the chief city of the south part of Canaan, Josh. x. 1—3. It fell to Benjamin's lot, Josh. xviii. 28. but joined close to Judah's, Josh. xv. 8. The children of Judah had taken it, Judg. i. 8. but the children of Benjamin suffered the Jebusites to dwell among them, Judg. i. 21. and they grew so upon them, that it became a city of Jebusites.

7 A

Judg.

Judg. xix. 11. Now the very first exploit David did, after he was anointed king over all Israel, was, to gain Jerusalem out of the hands of the Jebusites, which, because it belonged to Benjamin, he could not well attempt, till that tribe, which long adhered to Saul's house, 1 Chron. xii. 29. submitted to him. Here we have,

1. The Jebusites defiance of David, and his forces. They said, *Except thou take away the blind and the lame, thou shalt not come in hither*, ver. 6. They sent David this provoking message, because, as it is said afterwards, on another occasion, they could not believe, that *ever any man should enter into the gates of Jerusalem*, Lam. iv. 12. They confided either, 1. In the protection of their gods, which David, in contempt, had called the blind and the lame, for they have eyes and see not, feet and walk not; but, say they, these are the guardians of our city, and except thou take those away, which thou canst never do, thou wilt not come in hither. Some think they were consecrated images of brass, set up in the recesses of the fort, and intrusted with the custody of the place. They called their idols their Mauzzim, or strong holds, Dan. xi. 38. and as such relied on them; *the name of the Lord is our strong tower*, and his arm is strong, his eye piercing. Or, 2. In the strength of their fortifications, which they thought were made so impregnable by nature or art, or both, that the blind and the lame were sufficient to defend them, and make them good against the most powerful assailant. The strong hold of Zion they especially depended on, as that which could not be forced. Probably, they set a parcel of blind and lame people, invalids or maimed soldiers, to make their appearance upon the walls, in scorn of David and his men, judging them an equal match for him. Though there remain but wounded men amongst them, yet they should serve to beat back the besiegers. Compare Jer. xxxvii. 10. Note, The enemies of God's people are often very confident of their own strength, and most secure then when their day to fall draws nigh.

2. David's success against the Jebusites. Their pride and insolence, instead of daunting him, animated him, and when he made a general assault, he gave this order to his men: *he that smiteth the Jebusites, let him also throw down into the ditch, or gutter, the lame and the blind*, which are set upon the wall to affront us, and our God; and, it is probable, had themselves spoken blasphemous things, and were therefore hated of David's soul. Thus ver. 8. may be read; we fetch our reading of it from, 1 Chron. xi. 6. which speaks only of smiting the Jebusites, but nothing of the blind and the lame. The Jebusites had said, that if these images of theirs did not protect them, *the blind and the lame should not come into the house*, i. e. they would never again trust their palladium, (so Mr. Gregory understands it) nor pay the respect they had paid to their images; and David having gained the fort, said so too, that these images, which could not protect their worshippers, should never have place there more.

3. His fixing of his royal seat in Zion; he himself dwelt in the fort, (the strength whereof, which had given him opposition, and was a terror to him, now contributed to his safety) and he built houses round about for his attendants and guards, ver. 9. from Millo (the town-hall, or state-house) and inward. He proceeded and prospered in all he set his hand to, grew great in honour, strength and wealth: more and more honourable in the eyes of his subjects, and formidable in the eyes of his enemies, *for the Lord God of hosts was with him*. God has all creatures at his command, makes what use he pleaseth of them, and serves his own purposes by them: and he was with him, to direct, preserve and prosper him; and those that have the Lord of hosts for them, need not fear what hosts of men or devils can do against them. Those who grow great, must ascribe it to the presence of God with them, and give him the glory of it. The Church is called Zion, and the city of the living God; the Jebusites, Christ's enemies, must first be conquered and dispossessed, the blind and the lame taken away, and then Christ divides the spoil, sets up his throne there, and makes it his residence by the Spirit.

11. ¶ And Hiram king of Tyre, sent messengers to David, and cedar-trees, and carpenters, and masons: and they built David an house. 12. And David perceived that the LORD had established him king over Israel, and that he had exalted his kingdom for his people Israel's sake. 13. ¶ And David took him more concubines and wives out of Jerusalem, after he was come from Hebron: and there were yet sons and daughters born to David. 14. And these be the names of those that were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shammuah, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, 15. Ibhar also, and Elishua, and Nepheg, and Japhia, 16. And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphalet.

Here is, 1. David's house built, a royal palace, fit for the reception of the court he kept, and the court that was made to him, ver. 11. The Jews were husbandmen and shepherds, and did not much addict themselves either to merchandise, or manufactures, and therefore Hiram, king of Tyre, a wealthy prince, when he sent to congratulate David's accession to the throne, proffered him workmen, to build him a house: David thankfully accepted the proffer, and Hiram's workmen built David a house to his mind. Many have excelled in arts and sciences, that were strangers to the covenants of promise; yet David's house was never the worse, nor the less fit to be dedicated to God, for its being built by the sons of the stranger: It is prophesied of the gospel church, *The sons of the stranger shall build up thy wall, and their kings shall minister unto thee*, Isa. lx. 10.

2. David's government rooted and built up, ver. 12. 1. His kingdom was established, there was nothing to shake it, none to disturb his possession, or question his title. He that made him king established him, because he was to be a type of Christ, with whom God's hand should be established, and his covenant stand fast, Psalm lxxxix. 21—28. Saul was made king, but not established, so Adam in innocency. David was established king, so is the son of David, and all that, through him, are made to our God kings and priests. 2. It was exalted in the eyes both of its friends and enemies, never had the nation of Israel looked so great, nor made such a figure, as it began now to do. Thus it is promised of Christ, that he shall be *higher than the kings of the earth*, Psalm lxxxix. 27. God has highly exalted him, Phil. ii. 9. 3. David perceived it by the wonderful concurrence of providences to his establishment and advancement. *By this I knew that thou favourest me*, Psalm xli. 11. Many have the love and favour of God, and do not perceive it, and so want the comfort of it; but to be exalted to that, and established in it, and to perceive it, is happiness enough. 4. He owned that it was for his people Israel's sake, that God had done such great things for him; that he might be a blessing to them, and they might be happy under his administration. God did not make Israel his subjects for his sake, that he might be great, and rich, and absolute, but he made

him their king for their sakes, that he might lead, and guide, and protect them. Kings are *ministers of God to their people for good*, Rom. xiii. 4.

3. David's family multiplied and encreased. All the sons that were born to him after he came to Jerusalem, are here mentioned together; eleven in all; besides the six that were born to him before in Hebron, chap. iii. 2—5. There the mothers are mentioned, not here, only in general, that he took more concubines and wives, ver. 13. Shall we praise him for this? We praise him not; we justify him not; nor can scarce excuse him. The ill example of the patriarch might make him think there was no harm in it, and he might hope it would strengthen his interest, by multiplying his alliances, and increasing the royal family: *Happy is the man that has his quiver full of these arrows*. But one vine by the side of the house with the blessing of God, may send boughs to the sea, and branches to the rivers. Adam, by one wife, peopled the world, and Noah re-peopled it. David had many wives, and yet that did not keep him from coveting his neighbour's wife, and defiling her; for men that have once broke the fence, will wander endlessly. Of David's concubines, see 2 Sam. xv. 16. xvi. 22. xix. 3. Of his sons, see 1 Chron. iii. 5.

17. ¶ But when the Philistines heard that they had anointed David king over Israel, all the Philistines came up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went down to the hold. 18. The Philistines also came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim, 19. And David enquired of the LORD, saying, Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto David, Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand. 20. And David came to Baal-perazim, and David smote them there, and said, The LORD hath broken forth upon mine enemies before me, as the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place Baal-perazim. 21. And there they left their images, and David and his men burned them. 22. And the Philistines came up yet again, and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. 23. And when David enquired of the LORD, he said, Thou shalt not go up: but fetch a compass behind them, and come upon them over against the mulberry-trees: 24. And let it be when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that then thou shalt bestir thyself, for then shall the LORD go out before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines. 25. And David did so, as the LORD had commanded him; and smote the Philistines from Geba until thou come to Gazer.

The particular service which David was raised up for, was to *save Israel out of the hand of the Philistines*, chap. iii. 18. This therefore divine providence, in the first place, gives him an opportunity for. Two great victories obtained over the Philistines we have here an account of, by which David not only balanced the disgrace, and retrieved the loss Israel had sustained in the battle, wherein Saul was slain, but went far towards the total subduing of those vexatious neighbours the last remains of the devoted nations.

1. In both these actions the Philistines were the aggressors, stirred first towards their own destruction, and pulled it on their own heads. 1. In the former, they came up to seek David, ver. 17. because they heard he was anointed king over Israel. He that under Saul had slain his ten thousands, what would he do, when he himself came to be king? They therefore thought it was time to look about them, and try to crush his government in its infancy, before it was well settled. Their success against Saul, some years ago, perhaps, encouraged them to make this attack upon David; but they considered not that David had that presence of God with him, which Saul had forfeited and lost. The kingdom of the Messiah, as soon as ever it was set up in the world, was thus vigorously attacked by the powers of darkness, who, with the combined force, both of the Jews and Gentiles, made head against it: The heathen raged, and the kings of the earth set themselves to oppose it, but all in vain, Psalm ii. 1, &c. The destruction will turn, as this here did, upon Satan's own kingdom. They took counsel together, but were broken in pieces, Isa. viii. 9, 10. 2. In the latter, they came up yet again, hoping to recover what they had lost in the former engagement, and their hearts being hardened to their destruction, ver. 22. 3. In both they spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim, which lay very near Jerusalem: that city they hoped to make themselves masters of, before David had completed the fortifications of it. Jerusalem, from its infancy, has been aimed at, and struck at with a particular enmity. Their spreading themselves, intimates, that they were very numerous, and that they made a very formidable appearance. We read of the church's enemies, *going up on the breadth of the earth*, Rev. xx. 9. but the further they spread themselves, the fairer mark they are to God's arrows.

2. In both David, though forward enough to go forth against them, for as soon as he heard it, he went down to the hold, to secure some important and advantageous post, ver. 17. yet he entered not upon action, till he had enquired of the Lord by the breast-plate of judgment, ver. 19. and again, ver. 23. His enquiry was two-fold, 1. Concerning his duty. *Shall I go up?* Shall I have a commission from heaven to engage them? One would think he needed not doubt this; what was he made king for, but to fight the battles of the Lord, and Israel? But a good man loves to see God going before him in every step he takes. *Shall I go up now?* It is to be done, but is it to be done at this time? *In all thy ways acknowledge him*. And besides, though the Philistines were public enemies, yet some of them had been his particular friends; Achish had been kind to him in his distress, and had protected him, now faith David, ought not I, in remembrance of that, rather to make peace with them, than to make war with them? No, faith God, they are Israel's enemies, and are doomed to destruction, and therefore never scruple it, but go up. Concerning his success. His conscience asked for the former question, *Shall I go up?* His prudence asked this, *Wilt thou deliver them into my hand?* Hereby he owns his dependence on God for victory, that he could not conquer them, unless God delivered them into his hand: and refers himself to the good pleasure of God, *Wilt thou do it?* Yea, faith God, *I will doubtless do it*. If God send us, he will bear us out, and stand by us: the assurance God has given us of victory over our spiritual enemies,

enemies, that he will tread Satan under our feet shortly, should animate us in our spiritual conflicts. We do not fight at uncertainty. David had now a great army at command, and in good heart, yet he relied more on God's promise than his own force.

3. In the former of these engagements, David routed the army of the Philistines by dint of sword, *ver. 20. he smote them*; and when he had done, 1. He gave his God the glory; he said, *The Lord has broken forth upon my enemies before me*; I could not have done it, if he had not done it before me; he opened the breach, like the breach of waters in a dam, which, when once opened, grows wider and wider: the principal part of the work was God's doing; nay he did all, what David did was not worth speaking of, and therefore, *Not unto us, but unto the Lord give glory*. He hoped likewise, that this breach, like that of waters, was the plucking up of the sluice, to let in a final desolation upon them; and, to perpetuate the remembrance of it, he called the place Baal-perazim, the master of the breaches; because God having broken in upon their forces, he soon had the mastery of them. Let posterity take notice of it to God's honour. 2. He puts their gods to shame. They brought the images of their gods into the field, as their protectors, in imitation of the Israelites bringing the ark into their camp: but being put to flight, they could not stay to carry off their images, for they were a burden to the weary beasts, *Isa. xlv. 1.* and therefore they left them to fall with the rest of their baggage into the hands of the conqueror. Their images failed them, and gave them no assistance, and therefore they left their images to shift for themselves. God can make men sick of those things that they have been most fond of, and compel them to desert what they doted upon, and cast even the idols of silver and gold to the moles, and the bats, *Isa. ii. 20, 21.* David, and his men converted to their own use the rest of the plunder, but the images they burnt, as God had appointed, *Deut. vii. 5. Ye shall burn their graven images with fire*, in token of your detestation of idolatry, and lest they should be a snare. Bishop Patrick well observes here, that when the ark fell into the Philistines' hands, it consumed them, but when these images fell into the hands of Israel, they could not save themselves from being consumed.

4. In the latter of these engagements, God gave David some sensible tokens of his presence with him, bid him not fall upon them directly, as he had done before, but *fetch a compass behind them, ver. 23.* 1. God appoints him to draw back, as *Israel stood still to see the salvation of the Lord.* 2. He promised him to charge the enemy himself, by an invisible host of angels, *ver. 24.* Thou shalt hear the sound of a going, like the march of an army in the air, upon the tops of the mulberry-trees. Angels tread light, and he that can walk upon the clouds, can, when he pleases, walk on the tops of trees. Or (as Bishop Patrick understands it) at the head of the mulberry-trees, i. e. of the wood, or hedge-row of those trees. And, by that sign, thou shalt know that the Lord goes out before thee, though thou see him not, yet thou shalt hear him, and faith shall come and be confirmed by hearing. He goes forth to smite the host of the Philistines: When David himself had smitten them, *ver. 20.* he ascribed it to God, *the Lord has broken forth upon mine enemies*, to reward him for which thankful acknowledgment, the next time God did it himself alone, without putting him to any toil or peril; for those that own God for what he has done for them, he will do more. But observe, though God promised to go before him and smite the Philistines, yet David, when he heard the sound of the going, must bestir himself and be ready to pursue the victory. Note, God's grace must quicken our endeavours. If God work in us both to will and to do, it doth not follow that we must sit still, as those that have nothing to do, but we must therefore work out our salvation with all possible care and diligence, *Phil. ii. 12, 13.* The sound of the going was, 1. A signal to David when to move; it is comfortable going out when God goes before us. And, 2. Perhaps, it was an alarm to the enemy, and put them into confusion. Hearing the march of an army against their front they retreated with precipitation, and fell into David's army, which lay behind them in their rear. Those whom God fights against, it is said, *Lev. xxvi. 36. The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them.*

The success of this is briefly set down, *ver. 25.* David observed his orders, waited God's motion and stirred then, but not till then: Thus he was trained up in a dependence on God and his providence. God performed his promise, went before him, and routed all the enemies force, and David failed not to improve his advantages, he smote the Philistines even to the borders of their own country. When the kingdom of the Messiah was to be set up, the Apostles that were to beat down the devil's kingdom, must not attempt any thing till they received the promise of the spirit; who came with a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, *Acts ii. 2.* which was typified by this sound of the going on the tops of the mulberry-trees; and when they heard that, they must bestir themselves, and did so; they went forth conquering and to conquer.

C H A P. VI.

The obscurity of the ark, during the reign of Saul, had been as great a grievance to Israel as the insults of the Philistines. David having humbled the Philistines and mortified them, in gratitude for that favour, and in pursuance of his designs for the public welfare, is here bringing up the ark to his own city, that it might be near him, and be an ornament and strength to his new foundation. Here is, 1. An attempt to do it, which failed and miscarried. The design was laid, *ver. 1—2.* But, 1. They were guilty of an error in carrying it in a cart, *ver. 3—5.* 2. They were punished for that error by the sudden death of Uzzah, *ver. 6, 7.* which was a great terror to David, *ver. 8, 9.* and put a stop to his proceedings, *ver. 10, 11.* 2. The great joy and satisfaction with which it was at last done, *ver. 12—15.* And, (1.) The easiness that was between David and his people, *ver. 17—19.* (2.) The uneasiness that was between David and his wife upon that occasion, *ver. 16—20—23.* And when we consider that the ark was both the token of God's presence, and the type of Christ, we shall see this story very instructive.

1. **A** GAIN, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. 2. And David arose, and went with all the people that were with him, from Baale of Judah, to bring up from thence the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubims. 3. And they set the ark of God upon a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in

Gibeah: and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. 4. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark. 5. And David, and all the house of Israel, played before the LORD on all manner of instruments made of fir-wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

We have not heard a word of the ark, since it was lodged in Kerjath-jearim, immediately after its return out of its captivity among the Philistines, 1 Sam. vii. 1, 2. except that once Saul called for it, 1 Sam. xiv. 18. That which, in former days, had made so great a figure, is now thrown aside, as a neglected thing for many years. And if now the ark was for so many years in a house, let it not seem strange, that we find the church so long in the wilderness, *Rev. xii. 14.* Perpetual visibility is no mark of the true church. God is graciously present with the souls of his people, when they want the external tokens of his presence. But now David is settled in the throne, the honour of the ark begins to revive, and *Israel's care of it to flourish again*, wherein also, no doubt, the good people among them had been careful, but they lacked opportunity, allude to *Phil. iv. 10.*

1. Here is an honourable mention made of the ark. Because it had not been spoken of a great while: Now it is spoken of, observe how it is described, *ver. 2.* it is the ark of God, whose name is called by the name of the LORD of hosts, that dwelleth between the cherubims: Or, at which the name, even the name of the LORD of hosts was called upon: Or, upon which the name of LORD of hosts was called: Or, because of which the name is proclaimed, the name of the LORD of hosts, i. e. God was greatly magnified in the miracles done before the ark. Or the ark of God, who is called the name (*Lev. xxiv. 11, 16.*) the name of the LORD of hosts, sitting on the cherubims upon it. Let us learn hence, 1. To think and speak highly of God, He is the name above every name; the LORD of hosts, that has all the creatures in heaven and earth at his command, and receives homage from them all, and yet is pleased to dwell between the cherubims, over the propitiatory or mercy-seat, graciously manifesting himself to his people, reconciled to his mediator, and ready to do them good. 2. To think and speak honourably of holy ordinances which are to us, as the ark was to Israel, the tokens of God's presence, (*Matt. xxviii. 23.*) and the means of our communion with him, *Psal. xxvii. 4.* It is the honour of the ark, that it is the ark of God, he is jealous for it, it is magnified in it, his name is called upon it. The divine institution puts a beauty and grandeur upon holy ordinances, which otherwise have no form nor comeliness. Christ is our ark, in and by him God manifests his favour, and communicates his grace to us, and accepts our adorations and addresses.

2. Here is an honourable attendance given to the ark upon the removal of it. Now at length it is enquired after; David made the motion, 1 Chron. xiii. 1, 2, 3. and the heads of the congregation agreed to it, *ver. 4.* All the chosen men of Israel are called together to grace the solemnity, to pay their respect to the ark, and testify their joy in its revival. The nobility and gentry, elders and officers, came, to the number of thirty thousand, *ver. 1.* and the generality of the common people besides, 1 Chron. xiii. 5. for, some think, it was done at one of the three great festivals. This would make a noble cavalcade, and would help to possess the young people of the nation, who perhaps had scarce heard of the ark, with a mighty veneration for it; for this was certainly a treasure of inestimable value, which the king himself, and all the great men waited upon, and were a guard to.

3. Here are great expressions of joy upon the removal of the ark, *ver. 5.* David himself, and all that were with him that were musically inclined, made use of such instruments as they had, to excite and express their rejoicing upon this occasion. It might well put them into a transport of joy, to see the ark rise out of obscurity, and to move towards a public station. It is better to have the ark in a house than not at all, better in a house than a captive in Dagon's temple. But it is very desirable to have it in a tent pitched on purpose for it, where the resort to it may be more free and open. As secret worship, the more secret the better, so public worship, the more public the better: and we have reason to rejoice when restraints are taken off, and the ark of God finds welcome in the city of David, and has not only the protection and support, but the countenance and encouragement of the civil powers; for joy of this they played before the LORD. Note, Public joy must always be as before the LORD, with an eye to him, and terminating in him, and must not degenerate into that which is carnal and sensual. Dr. Lightfoot supposeth, that upon this occasion David penned the sixty-eighth Psalm, because it begins with that ancient prayer of Moses at the removing of the ark, *Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered*: And notice is taken there, *ver. 25.* of the singers and players on instruments that attended, and *ver. 27.* of the princes of several of the tribes, and perhaps those words in the last verse, *O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy place*, were added upon occasion of the death of Uzzah.

4. Here is an error that they were guilty of in this matter, that they carried the ark in a cart or carriage, whereas the priests should have carried it upon their shoulders, *ver. 3.* The Kohathites that had the charge of the ark, had no waggons assigned them, because their service was to bear it upon their shoulders, *Numb. vii. 9.* The ark was no such heavy burden, but that they might among them have carried it as far as Mount Zion upon their shoulders, they needed not put it in a cart like a common thing. It was no excuse for them, that the Philistines had done so, and were not punished for it; they knew no better, nor had they any priests or Levites with them to undertake the carrying of it; better carry it in a cart, than any of Dagon's priests should carry it. Philistines may cart the ark, and not hear of it; but if Israelites do it, it is at their peril. And it mended the matter very little, that it was a new cart; old or new, it was not what God had appointed. I wonder so wise and good a man as David was, that converted so much with the law of God, came to be guilty of such an oversight: We will charitably hope, it was because he was so extremely intent upon the substance of the service, that he forgot to take care of this circumstance.

6. And when they came to Nachon's threshing-floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it. 7. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error, and there he died by the ark of God. 8. And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-uzzah to this day. 9. And David was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, **How**

How shall the ark of the LORD come to me! 10. So David would not remove the ark of the LORD unto him into the city of David: but David carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 11. And the ark of the LORD continued in the house of Obed-edom the Gittite, three months: and the LORD blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.

We have here Uzzah struck dead for touching the ark, when it was upon its journey towards the city of David; a sad providence; which damped their mirth, stopped the progress of the ark, and for the present dispersed this great assembly, which was come together to attend it, and sent them home in a fright.

1. Uzzah's offence seemed very small. He and his brother Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, in whose house the ark had long been lodged, having been used to attend it, to shew their willingness to prefer the public benefit before their own private honour and advantage, undertook to drive the cart, in which the ark was carried; this being, perhaps, the last service they were likely to do it, for others would be employed about it when it came to the city of David. Ahio went before to clear the way, and, if need were, to lead the oxen; Uzzah followed close to the side of the cart; it happened the oxen shook it, *ver. 6.* The critics are not agreed about the signification of the original word; *They stumbled*, so our margin: *They kicked*, so some, perhaps, against the goad, with which Uzzah drove them. *They stuck in the mire*, so some. By some accident or other, the ark was in danger of being overthrown: Uzzah thereupon laid hold on it, to save it from falling; we have reason to think, with a very good intention to preserve the reputation of the ark, and to prevent any ill omen. Yet this was his crime: Uzzah was a Levite, but priests only might touch the ark. The law was express concerning the Kohathites, that though they were to carry the ark by the slaves, yet *they must not touch the holy thing, lest they die*, Numb. iv. 15. and Uzzah's long familiarity with the ark, and the constant attendance he had given to it, might occasion his presumption, but would not excuse it.

2. His punishment for this offence seems very great, *ver. 7.* *The anger of the Lord was kindled against him*, for in sacred things he is a jealous God, and he *smote him there for his rashness*, as the word is, and struck him dead upon the spot. There he sinned, and there he died by the ark of God: even the mercy-seat would not save him. Why was God thus severe with him? (1.) The touching of the ark was forbidden to the Levites, expressly under pain of death, lest they die: and God by this instance of severity would shew, how he might justly have dealt with our first parents, when they had eaten that which was forbidden under the same penalty, *lest ye die*. (2.) God saw Uzzah's heart and the presumption and irreverence of that: Perhaps he affected to shew before this great assembly, how bold he could make with the ark, having been so long acquainted with it. Familiarity even with that which is most awful, is apt to breed contempt. (3.) David afterwards owned that Uzzah died for an error they were all guilty of, which was carrying the ark in a cart; because it was not carried on the Levites' shoulders, *The Lord made that breach upon us*, 1 Chron. xv. 13. But Uzzah was singled out to be made an example, perhaps, because he had been most forward in advising that way of conveyance; however, he had fallen into another error, which was occasioned by that. It may be the ark was not covered, as it should have been with the covering of badgers skins, Numb. iv. 6. and that was a further provocation. (4.) God would hereby strike an awe upon the thousands of Israel, would convince them that the ark was nevertheless venerable, for its having been so long in mean circumstances; and thus he would teach them to rejoice with trembling, and always to treat holy things with reverence and holy fear. (5.) God would hereby teach us, that a good intention will not justify a bad action; it will not suffice to say of that which is ill done, that it was well meant. He will let us know that he can and will secure his ark, and needs not any man's sin to help him to do it. (6.) If it were so great a crime for one to lay hold on the ark of the covenant that had no right to do so, what is it for those to lay claim to the privileges of the covenant, that come not up to the terms of it? To the wicked, God saith, *What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth?* Psalm l. 16. *Friend, how comest thou in hither?* If the ark was so sacred, and not to be touched irreverently, what is the blood of the covenant? Heb. x. 29.

3. David's resentment of this dreadful stroke was very deep, and perhaps not altogether as it should have been. He should have humbled himself under God's hand, confessed the error, acknowledged God's righteousness, and deprecated the further tokens of his displeasure, and then have gone on with the good work he had in hand. But we find,

1. He was displeased, it is not said because Uzzah had affronted God, but because God had made a breach upon Uzzah, *ver. 8.* *David's anger was kindled.* It is the same word that is used for God's displeasure, *ver. 7.* Because God was angry, David was angry and out of humour. As if God might not assert the honour of his ark, and frown upon one that touched it rudely, without asking David leave. Shall mortal man pretend to be more just than God? arraign his proceedings, or charge him with iniquity? David did not now act like himself, like a man after God's own heart. It is not for us to be displeased at any thing that God doth, how displeasing soever it is to us. The death of Uzzah was indeed an eclipse to the glory of a solemnity, which David valued himself upon more than any thing else, and might give birth to some speculations among those that were disaffected to him, as if God were departing from him too, but, however, he ought to have subscribed to the righteousness and wisdom of God in it, and not to have been displeased at it. When we lie under God's anger, we must keep under our own.

2. He was afraid, *ver. 9.* it should seem he was afraid with amazement; for he said, *how shall the ark of the Lord come to me?* As if God sought advantages against all that were about him, and was so extreme tender of his ark, that there was no dealing with it; and therefore better for him to keep it at a distance, *qui procul a Jove, procul a fulmine*: He should rather have said, let the ark come to me, and I will take warning by this to treat it with more reverence: *Provoke me not* (saith God, Jer. xxv. 6.) *and I will do you no hurt.* Or this may be looked upon as a good use which David made of this tremendous judgment; he did not say, sure Uzzah was a sinner above all men, because he suffered such things, but is concerned for himself, as one conscious, not only of his own unworthiness of God's favour, but his obnoxiousness to God's displeasure; God might justly strike me dead as he did Uzzah; *my flesh trembles for fear of thee*, Psalm cxix. 120. This God intends in his judgments, that others may hear and fear. David therefore will not bring the ark into his own city, *ver. 10.* till he is better prepared for its reception.

3. He took care to perpetuate the remembrance of this stroke by a new name he gave to the place, *Perez-uzzah, the breach of Uzzah*, *ver. 8.* He had been lately triumphing in the breach made upon his enemies, and called place the Baal-perazim, a place of breaches. But here is a breach upon his

friends. When we see one breach we should consider, that we know not where the next will be. The memorial of this stroke would be a warning to posterity to take heed of all rashness and irreverence in dealing about holy things; for *God will be sanctified in those that come nigh unto him*.

4. He lodged the ark in a good house, the house of Obed-edom a Levite, which happened to be near the place where this disaster happened, and there it was kindly entertained and bid welcome, and continued there *three months*, *ver. 10; 11.* Obed-edom knew what slaughter the ark had made among the Philistines that imprisoned it, and the Bethshemites that looked into it. He saw Uzzah struck dead for touching it, and perceived David himself was afraid of meddling with it, yet he cheerfully invites it to his own house, and opens his doors to it without fear, knowing it was a *favour of death unto death*, to those only that treated it ill. "O the courage (saith Bishop Hall) of an honest and faithful heart; nothing can make God otherwise than amiable to his own: even his very justice is lovely." 2. It paid well for its entertainment. *The Lord blessed Obed-edom and all his household.* The same hand that punished Uzzah's proud presumption, rewarded Obed-edom's humble boldness, and made the ark to him a *favour of life unto life*. Let none think the worse of the gospel for the judgments inflicted on those that reject it, but set in opposition to them the blessings it brings to those that duly receive it. None ever had, or ever shall have reason to say, that *it is in vain to serve God*. Let masters of families be encouraged to keep up religion in their families, and to serve God, and the interests of his kingdom, with their houses and estates, for that is the way to bring a blessing upon all they have. The ark is a guest which none shall lose by, that bid it welcome. Josephus saith, that whereas before Obed-edom was poor, on a sudden, in these three months, his estate increased to the envy of his neighbours. Piety is the best friend to prosperity. In wisdom's left hand are riches and honour. His household shared in the blessing: It is good living in a family that entertains the ark, for all about it will fare the better for it.

12. ¶ And it was told king David, saying, The LORD hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him, because of the ark of God. So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom, into the city of David, with gladness. 13. And it was so, that when they that bare the ark of the LORD, had gone six paces, he sacrificed oxen and fatlings. 14. And David danced before the LORD with all his might; and David was girded with a linen ephod. 15. So David, and all the house of Israel, brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. 16. And as the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window, and saw king David leaping and dancing before the LORD; and she despised him in her heart. 17. ¶ And they brought in the ark of the LORD, and set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it: and David offered burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings before the LORD. 18. And as soon as David had made an end of offering burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD of hosts. 19. And he dealt among all the people, even among the whole multitude of Israel, as well to the women as men, to every one a cake of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine: so all the people departed every one to his house.

We have here the second attempt to bring the ark home to the city of David, and this succeeded, though the former miscarried. It should seem the blessing with which the house of Obed-edom was blessed for the ark's sake, was a great inducement to David to bring it forward, for when that was told him, *ver. 12.* he hastened to fetch it to him. For, 1. It was an evidence that God was reconciled to them, and his anger was turned away. As David could read God's frowns upon them all in Uzzah's stroke, so he could read God's favour to them all in Obed-edom's prosperity; and if God be at peace with them, they can cheerfully go on with their design. 2. It was an evidence that the ark was not such a burdensome stone, as it was taken to be, but, on the contrary, happy was the man that had it near him. Christ is indeed a *stone of stumbling*, and a *rock of offence*, to them that are disobedient, but to them which believe, he is a *corner-stone, elect, precious*, 1 Pet. ii. 6, 7, 8. When David heard that Obed-edom had such joy of the ark, then he would have it to his own city. Note, The experience others have had of the gains of godliness, should encourage us to be religious. Is the ark a blessing to others' houses, let us bid it welcome to ours; we may have it, and the blessing of it, without fetching it from our neighbours.

Let us see how David managed the matter now.

1. He rectified the former error; did not put the ark in a cart now, but ordered those, whose business it was, to carry it on their shoulders. This is implied here, *ver. 13.* and expressed, 1 Chron. xv. 15. Then we make a good use of the judgments of God on ourselves and others, when we are awakened by them to reform and amend whatever has been amiss.

2. At their first setting out he offered sacrifices to God, *ver. 13.* by way of atonement for their former errors, and in a thankful acknowledgment of the blessings bestowed on the house of Obed-edom. Then we are likely to speed in our enterprises, when we begin with God, and give diligence to make our peace with him. When we attend upon God in holy ordinances, our eye must be to the great sacrifice, to which we owe it that we are taken into covenant and communion with God, Psalm l. 5.

3. He himself attended the solemnity with the highest expressions of joy that could be, *ver. 14.* *he danced before the Lord with all his might*; he leaped for joy as one transported with the occasion, and the more, because of the disappointment he met with the last time. It is a pleasure to a good man to see his errors rectified, and himself in the way of his duty. His dancing, I suppose, was not artificial, by any certain rule or measure, nor do we find that any danced with him; but it was a natural expression of his great joy and exultation of mind. He did it with all his might, so we should perform all our religious services, as those that are intent upon them, and desire to do them in the best manner: all our might is little enough to be employed in holy duties: the work deserves it all. On this occasion David

David laid aside his imperial purple, and put on a plain linen ephod, which was light and convenient for dancing, and was used in religious exercises by those who were no priests, for Samuel wore one, 1 Sam. ii. 18. That great prince thought it no disparagement to him to appear in the habit of a minister to the ark.

4. All the people triumphed in this advancement of the ark, *ver. 15. they brought it up into the joyful city with shouting, and with sound of trumpet*, so expressing their own joy in loud acclamations, and giving notice to all about them to rejoice with them. The public and free administration of ordinances, not only under the protection, but under the smiles of the civil powers, is just matter of rejoicing to any people.

5. The ark was safely brought to, and honourably deposited in, the place prepared for it, *ver. 17. they set it in the midst of the tabernacle, or tent, which David had pitched for it*; not the tabernacle which Moses reared, that was at Gibeon, 2 Chron. 1. 13. and, we may suppose, being made of cloth, in so many hundred years, it was gone to decay, and not fit to be removed; but this was a tent set up on purpose to receive the ark. He would not bring it into a private house, no not his own, lest it should seem to be too much engrossed, and peoples resort to it to pray before it should be less free; yet he would not build a house for it, lest that should supersede the building a more stately temple in due time; and therefore, for the present, he placed it within curtains, under a canopy, in imitation of Moses's tabernacle. As soon as ever it was lodged, he offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, in thankfulness to God, that the business was now done without any more errors or breaches; and in supplication to God for the continuance of his favour. Note, All our joys must be sanctified both with praises and prayers; *for with such sacrifices God is well pleased*. Now it it should seem he penned Psalm cxxxii.

6. The people were then dismissed with great satisfaction. He sent them away, 1. With a gracious prayer; *he blessed them in the name of the Lord of hosts, ver. 18. having not only a particular interest in heaven, as a prophet, but an authority over them as a prince; for the less is blessed of the better*, Heb. vii. 7. He prayed to God to bless them, and particularly to reward them for the honour and respect they had now shewed to his ark; assuring them they should be no losers by their journey, but the blessing of God upon their affairs at home would more than bear their charges. He testified his desire for their welfare by this prayer for them, and let them know they had a king that loved them. 2. With a generous treat; for so it was rather than a dole; the great men, it is probable, he entertained at his own house, but to the multitude of Israel, men and women (and children faith Josephus) he dealt to each a cake of bread (a spice cake, to some) a good piece of flesh, a handsome, decent piece, to some, a part of the peace-offerings, so Josephus, that they might feast with him, upon the sacrifice, and a flagon, or bottle of wine, *ver. 19. probably, he ordered this provision to be made for them at their respective quarters, and this he did, (1.) In token of his joy and gratitude to God. When the heart is enlarged in cheerfulness, that should open the hand in liberality. The feast of Purim was observed with sending portions one to another, Esth. ix. 22. As they to whom God is merciful, ought to shew mercy in forgiving, so they to whom God is bountiful, ought to exercise bounty in giving. (2.) To recommend himself to the people, and confirm his interest in them, for every one is a friend to him that giveth gifts. They that cared not for his prayers, would love him for his generosity; and this would encourage them to attend him another time, if he saw cause to call them together.*

20. ¶ Then David returned to bless his household: and Michal the daughter of Saul came out to meet David, and said, How glorious was the king of Israel to-day, who uncovered himself to-day in the eyes of the hand-maids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovereth himself! 21. And David said unto Michal, *It was before the LORD*, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD. 22. And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maid-servants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour. 23. Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death.

David having dismissed the congregation with a blessing, returned to bless his household, *ver. 20. i. e. to pray with them and for them, and to offer up his family thanksgiving for this national mercy*. Ministers must not think that their public performances will excuse them from their family worship; but when they have with their instructions and prayers blessed the solemn assemblies, they must return in the same manner to bless the households, for with them they are in a particular manner charged. David, though he had prophets, and priests, and Levites about him to be his chaplains, yet did not devolve the work upon them, but himself blessed his household. It is angels work to worship God, and therefore sure that can be no disparagement to the greatest of men.

Never did David return to his house with so much pleasure and satisfaction, as he did now he had got the ark into his neighbourhood; and yet even this joyful day concluded with some uneasiness, occasioned by the pride and peevishness of his wife. Even the palaces of princes are not exempt from domestic troubles. David had pleased all the multitude of Israel, but Michal was not pleased with his dancing before the ark: For this, when he was at a distance she scorned him, and when he came home she scolded him. She was not displeased at his generosity to the people, nor did she grudge the entertainment he gave them, but she thought he demeaned himself too much in dancing before the ark. It was not her covetousness, but her pride that made her fret.

1. When the saw David in the street dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart, *ver. 16. she thought this mighty zeal of his for the ark of God, and the transport of joy he was in upon its coming home to him, was but a foolish thing and unbecoming so great a soldier, and statesman, and monarch, as he was: it had been enough for him to encourage the devotion of others, but she looked upon it as a thing below him to appear so very devout himself: what a fool (thinks she) does my husband make of himself now! How fond is he of this ark, that might as well have lain still where it had lain for so many years! Much devotion has almost made him mad. Note, The exercises of religion appear very mean in the eyes of those that have little or no religion themselves.*

2. When he came home in as good a humour as could be, she fell foul upon him, was so full of disdain and indignation, that she could not contain till she had him in private, but went out to meet him with her reproaches.

No. XLVII.

Observe, 1. How she taunted him, *ver. 20. How glorious was the king of Israel to-day! What a figure didst thou make to-day in the midst of the mob; how unbecoming thy post and character! Her contempt of him and his devotion began in the heart, but out of the abundance of that the mouth spake. That which displeased her was his affection to the ark, which she could wish he had no greater kindness for than she had: but she basely represents his carriage in dancing before the ark, as lewd and immodest, and while really she was displeased at it, as a diminution to his honour, she pretended to dislike it, as a reproach to his virtue, that he uncovered himself in the eyes of the maid-servants, so as no man would have done, but one of the vain fellows, that cares not how much he shames himself. We have no reason to think that this was true in fact: David, no doubt, observed a decorum, and governed his zeal with discretion; but it is common for those that reproach religion thus to put false colours upon it, and lay it under the most odious characters. To have abused any man on this fashion for his pious zeal, had been very profane; but to abuse her own husband thus, whom she ought to reverence, and one whose prudence and virtue were above the reach of malice itself to blemish, one who had shewed such an affection for her, that he would not accept a crown, unless he might have her restored to him, *chap. iii. 13. was a most base and wicked thing*, and shewed her to have more of Saul's daughter in her, than of David's wife, or Jonathan's sister.*

2. How he replied to her reproach. He doth not upbraid her with her treacherous departure from him, to embrace the bosom of a stranger. He had forgiven that, and therefore had forgotten it, though it may be his own conscience on this occasion upbraided him with his folly in receiving her again, for that is said to pollute the land, *Jer. iii. 1. but he justifies himself in what he did.*

1. He designed thereby to honour God, *ver. 21. It was before the Lord*, and with an eye to him. Whatever invidious construction she was pleased to put upon it, he had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he sincerely aimed at the glory of God, for whom he thought he could never do enough. Here he minds her indeed of the setting aside of her father's house, to make way for him to the throne, that she might not think herself the most proper judge of decency; *God chose me before thy father, and appointed me to be ruler over Israel*, and now I am the fountain of honour; and if the expressions of a warm devotion to God were looked upon as mean and unfashionable in thy father's court, yet I will play before the Lord, and thereby bring them into reputation again. And if this be to be vile, *ver. 22. I will be yet more vile*. Note, 1. We should be afraid of censuring the devotions of others, though it may not agree with our sentiments, because, for ought we know, the heart may be upright in it, and who are we that we should despise those whom God has accepted? 2. If we can approve ourselves to God in what we do in religion, and do it as before the Lord, we need not value the censures and reproaches of men. If we appear right in God's eyes, no matter how mean we appear in the eyes of the world. 3. The more we are villified for well doing, the more resolute we should be in it, and hold our religion the faster, and bind it the closer to us, for the endeavours of Satan's agents to shake us, and to shame us out of it, *I will be yet more vile*.

2. He designed thereby to humble himself. *I will be base in mine own sight*, and will think nothing too mean, to stoop to for the honour of God. In the throne of judgment, and in the field of battle, none shall do more to support the grandeur and authority of a prince than David shall, but in acts of devotion he lays aside the thoughts of majesty, humbles himself to the dust before the Lord, joins in with the meanest services done in honour of the ark, and yet thinks it no diminution to him. The greatest of men is less than the least of the ordinances of Jesus Christ.

3. He doubted not but even this would turn to his reputation among those whose reproach she feared: *Of the maid-servants shall I be had in honour*. The common people would be so far from thinking the worse of him for these pious condescensions, that they would esteem and honour him so much the more. Those that are truly pious, are sometimes manifested in the consciences even of those that speak ill of them, 2 Cor. v. 11. Let us never be driven from our duty by the fear of reproach, for to be steady and resolute in it will, perhaps, turn to our reputation more than we think it will. Piety will have its praise, let us not then be indifferent in it, nor afraid or ashamed to own it.

David was contented thus to justify himself, and did not any further animadvert upon Michal's insolence, but God punished her for it, writing her for ever childless from this time forward, *ver. 23. the unjustly reproached David for his devotion, and therefore God justly put her under the perpetual reproach of barrenness. They that honour God, he will honour; but those that despise him, and his servants and service, shall be lightly esteemed.*

C H A P. VII.

Still the ark is David's care, as well as his joy. In this chapter we have, 1. His consultation with Nathan about building a house for it; he signifies his purpose to do it, *ver. 1, 2. and Nathan approves his purpose, ver. 3. 2. His communion with God about it. (1.) A gracious message God sent him about it, accepting his purpose, countermanding the performance, and promising him an entail of blessings upon his family, ver. 4—17. (2.) A very humble prayer which David offered up to God, in return to that gracious message: thankfully accepting God's promises to him, and earnestly praying for the performance of them, ver. 18—29. And in both these there is an eye to the Messiah, and his kingdom.*

1. AND it came to pass, when the king sat in his house, and the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies; 2. That the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains. 3. And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in thine heart: for the LORD is with thee.

Here is, 1. David at rest. *He sat in his house, ver. 1. quiet and undisturbed, having no occasion to take the field; The Lord had given him rest round about, from all those that were enemies to his settlement in the throne, and he sets himself to enjoy that rest; though he was a man of war, he was for peace, Psal. cxx. 7. and did not delight in war. He had not been long at rest, nor was it long before he was again engaged in war: but at present he enjoyed a calm, and he was in his element when he was sitting in his house, meditating in the law of God.*

2. David's thought of building a temple for the honour of God. He had built a palace for himself, and a city for his servants, and now he thinks

of building a habitation for the ark. 1. Thus he would make a grateful return for the honours God had put upon him. Note, When God in his providence has remarkably done much for us, it should put us upon contriving what we may do for him and his glory. *What shall I render unto the Lord?* 2. Thus he would improve the present calm, and make a good use of the rest God had given him. Now he was not called out to serve God and Israel in the high places of the field, he would employ his thoughts, and time, and estate, in serving him another way, and not indulge himself in ease, much less in luxury. When God in his providence gives us rest, and finds us little to do of worldly business, we must do so much the more for God and our souls. How different were the thoughts of David, when he sat in his palace, from Nebuchadnezzar's, when he walked in his? Dan. iv. 29. That proud man thought of nothing but the might of his own power, and the honour of his own majesty; this humble soul is full of contrivance how to glorify God, and give honour to him; and how God resisted the proud, and gave grace and glory to the humble, the event shewed. David considered, ver. 2. the stateliness of his own habitation: *I dwell in a house of cedar*; and compared with that the meanness of the habitation of the ark, that dwells within curtains; and thought this incongruous, that he should dwell in a palace and the ark in a tent. David had been uneasy till he found out a place for the ark, Psalm cxxxii. 4, 5. and now he is uneasy till he finds out a better place. Gracious grateful souls, (1.) Never think they can do enough for God, but when they have done much, are still projecting to do more, and devising liberal things. (2.) They cannot enjoy their own accommodations while they see the church of God in distress and under a cloud. David can take little pleasure in a house of cedar for himself, unless the ark have one. Those who stretched themselves upon beds of ivory, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, though they had David's music, had not David's spirit, Amos vi. 4—6. nor they who dwell in their ceiled houses, while God's house lay waste.

3. His communicating this thought to Nathan the prophet. He told him, as a friend and confidant whom he used to advise with. Could not David have gone about it himself? Was it not a good work? Was not he himself a prophet? Yes, but *in multitude of counsellors there is safety*. David told him, that by him he might know the mind of God. It was certainly a good work, but it was uncertain whether it was the will of God that David should have the doing of it.

4. Nathan's approbation of it. *Go, do all that is in thine heart, for the Lord is with thee*, ver. 3. We do not find that David told him he purposed to build a temple, only that it was a trouble to him there was not one built; from which Nathan easily gathered what was in his heart, and bid him go on and prosper. Note, We ought to do all we can to encourage and promote the good purposes and designs of others, and put in a good word, as we have opportunity, to forward a good work. Nathan spoke this, not in God's name, but as from himself; not as a prophet, but as a wife and good man; it was agreeable to the revealed will of God, which requires that all in their places should lay out themselves for the advancement of religion and the service of God, though, it seems, the secret will was otherwise; that David should not do this. It was Christ's prerogative always to speak the mind of God, which he perfectly knew; other prophets spake it only when the spirit of prophecy was upon them; but, if any thing they mistook, as Samuel, 1 Sam. xvi. 6. and Nathan here, God soon rectified the mistake.

4. ¶ And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, 5. Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? 6. Whereas I have not dwelt in any house, since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent, and in a tabernacle. 7. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar? 8. Now therefore, so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheep-cote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel. 9. And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. 10. (Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more: neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime. 11. And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies.) Also the LORD telleth thee, that he will make thee an house. 12. ¶ And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 13. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 14. I will be his father, and he shall be my son; if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: 15. But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. 16. And thine house, and thy kingdom, shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. 17. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

We have here a full revelation of God's favour to David, and the kind intentions of that favour; the notices and assurances of which God sent him by Nathan the prophet, whom he intrusted to deliver this long message to him. The design of it is to take him off from his purpose of building the

temple, and was therefore sent, 1. By the same hand that had given him encouragement to do it; lest, if it had been sent by any other, Nathan should have been despised and insulted over, and David should have been perplexed, being encouraged by one prophet, and discouraged by another. 2. The same night, that Nathan might not continue long in an error, nor David have his head any further filled with thoughts of that which he must never bring to pass. God might have said this to David himself immediately, but he chose to send it by Nathan to support the honour of his prophets, and to preserve in David a regard to them; though he be the head, they must be the eyes, by whom he must see the visions of the Almighty, and the tongue by which he must hear the word of God. He that delivereth this long message to Nathan, assisted his memory to retain it, that he might deliver it fully, (he being resolved to deliver it faithfully) as he received it of the Lord.

Now in this message,

1. David's purpose to build God a house is superseded: God took notice of that purpose, for he knows what is in man; and he was well pleased with it; as appears 1 Kings viii. 18. *Thou didst well that it was in thine heart*; yet he forbade him to go on with his purpose, ver. 5. *Shalt thou build me an house?* No, *thou shalt not*, as it is explained in the parallel place, 1 Chron. xvii. 4. There is other work appointed for thee to do, which must be done first. David is a man of war, and he must enlarge the borders of Israel, by carrying on their conquests. David is a sweet psalmist, and he must prepare psalms for the use of the temple when it is built, and settle the courses of the Levites; but for building the house, his son's genius will lie more that way, and he will have a better treasure to bear the charge of it, and therefore let it be reserved for him to do. *As every man hath received the gift, so let him minister*.

The building of a temple was to be a work of time, and preparation made for it; but it was a thing that had never been spoken of till now. God tells him, 1. That hitherto he never had had a house built for him, ver. 6. a tabernacle had served hitherto, and it might serve a while longer. God matters not outward pomp in his service; his presence was as surely with his people when the ark was in a tent, as when it was in a temple; David was uneasy that the ark was in curtains, a mean and moveable habitation, but God never complained of it as any uneasiness to him. He did not dwell, but walk, and yet fainted not, nor was weary. Christ, like the ark, when here on earth, walked in a tent and tabernacle, for he went about doing good, and dwelt not in any house of his own, till he ascended on high, to the mansions above, in his Father's house, and there he sat down. The church like the ark, in this world is ambulatory, dwells in a tent, because its present state is both pastoral and military, its continuing city is to come. David in his psalms often calls the tabernacle a temple, as Psalm v. 7. xxvii. 4. xxix. 9. lvi. 4. cxxxviii. 2. because it answered the mention of a temple, though it was made but of curtains: wife and good men value not the shew, while they have the substance. David perhaps had more true devotion, and sweeter communion with God in a house of curtains, than any of his successors in the house of cedar. 2. That he had never given any orders or directions, or the least intimation, to any of the sceptres of Israel, i. e. to any of the judges, 1 Chron. xvii. 6. (for rulers are called sceptres, Ezek. xix. 14. the great ruler is called so, Numb. xxiv. 17.) concerning the building of the temple, ver. 7. That worship only is acceptable which is instituted, why should David therefore design what God never ordained? Let him wait for a warrant, and then let him do it. Better a tent of God's appointing, than a temple of his own inventing.

2. David is minded of the great things God had done for him, to let him know that he was a favourite of heaven, though he had not the favour to be employed in this service: as also that God was not indebted to him for his good intentions; but whatever he did for God's honour, God was beforehand with him, ver. 8, 9. He had raised him from a very mean and low condition; *Took him from the sheep-cote*. It is good for those who are come to great preferment, to be often minded of their small beginnings, that they may always be humble and thankful. 2. He had given him success and victory over his enemies, ver. 9. *I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest*, to protect thee when pursued, to prosper thee when pursuing; *I have cut off all thine enemies*, that stood in the way of thine advancement and settlement. 3. He had crowned him not only with power and dominion in Israel, but with honour and reputation among the nations about; *I have made thee a great name*: He was become famous for his courage, conduct, and great achievements, and was more talked of than any of the great men of his day. A great name is what they who have, have great reason to be thankful for, and may improve to good purposes; but what they that have not, have no reason to be ambitious of: a good name is more desirable. A man may pass through the world very obscurely, and yet very comfortably.

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4. Blessings are intailed upon the family and posterity of David. David had purposed to build God a house, and, in requital, God promised to build him a house, ver. 11. whatever we do for God, or sincerely design to do, though providence prevents our doing it, we shall in no wise lose our reward. He had promised to make him a name, ver. 9. here he promiseth to make him a house, which should bear up that name. It would be a great satisfaction to David, while he lived, to have the inviolable assurance of a divine promise, that his family should flourish when he is gone. Next to the happiness of our souls, and the church of God, we would desire the happiness of our seed, that those who come of us, may be praising God on earth, when we are praising him in heaven.

1. Some of these promises relate to Solomon, his immediate successor, and to the royal line of Judah. 1. That God would advance him to the throne. Those words, *when the days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers*, intimate, that David himself should come to his grave in peace; and then *I will set up thy seed*. This favour was so much the greater, because it was more than God had done for Moses, or Joshua, or any of the judges whom he called to feed his people. David's government was the first that

was entailed, for the promise made to Christ, for the kingdom, was to reach to his spiritual seed: *If children, then heirs.* 2. That he would settle him in the throne. *I will establish his kingdom,* ver. 12. *The throne of his kingdom,* ver. 13. His title shall be clear and uncontested, his interest confirmed and his administration steady. 3. That he would employ him in that good work of building the temple, which David had only the satisfaction of designing. *He shall build a house for my name,* ver. 13. The work shall be done though David should not have the doing of it. 4. That he would take him into the covenant of adoption, ver. 14, 15. *I will be his father and he shall be my son.* We need no more to make us and ours happy, but to have God to be a father to us and them: and all those to whom God is a father, he doth by his grace make his sons by giving them the disposition of children. If he be a careful, tender, bountiful father to us, we must be obedient tractable, dutiful children to him. The promise here speaks as unto sons. (1.) That his father would correct him, where there was occasion, for *what son is he whom the father chasteneth not!* Afflictions are an article of the covenant, and are not only consistent with, but flow from God's fatherly love. *If he commit iniquity,* as it proved he did, (1 Kings xi. 1.) *I will chasten him* to bring him to repentance, but it shall be *with the rod of men*; such a rod as men may wield, and not *plead against him with the greater power of a God,* Job xxiii. 6. Or rather such a rod as men may bear. I will consider his frame, and correct him with all possible tenderness and compassion, when there is need, and no more than there is need; it shall be *with the stripes, the touches* (so the word is) *of the children of men*; not a stroke or wound, but a gentle touch. (2.) That yet he would not disinherit him, ver. 15. *my mercy* (and that is the inheritance of sons) *shall not depart from him.* The revolt of the ten tribes from the house of David was their correction for iniquity, but the constant adherence of the other two to that family, which was a competent support of the royal dignity, perpetuated the mercy of God to the seed of David, according to this promise; though that family was cut short yet it was not cut off, as the house of Saul was. Never any other family sway'd the sceptre of Judah, but that of David only. This is that covenant of royalty celebrated, *Psalms lxxxix.* 3, &c. as typical of the covenant of redemption and grace.

2. Others of them relate to Christ, who is often called David, and the son of David: that son of David to whom those promises pointed, and in whom they had their full accomplishment. He was of the seed of David, Acts xiii. 23. To whom God gave the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32. All power both in heaven and earth, and authority, to execute judgment. He was to build the gospel temple, a house for God's name, Zech. vi. 12, 13. That promise, *I will be his father, and he shall be my son,* is expressly applied to Christ by the apostle, Heb. i. 5. But the establishing of his house, and his throne, and his kingdom for ever, ver. 13, and again, and a third time, ver. 16. *for ever*, can be applied to no other but Christ and his kingdom; David's house and kingdom are long since come to an end, it is only the Messiah's kingdom that is everlasting, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. The supposition of committing iniquity cannot indeed be applied to the Messiah himself, but it is applicable (and very comfortably) in his spiritual seed; true believers have their infirmities, for which they may expect to be corrected, but they shall not be cast off. Every transgression in the covenant will not throw us out of covenant.

Now, 1. This message Nathan faithfully delivered to David, ver. 17. though in forbidding him to build the temple, he contradicted his own words, yet he was not backward to do it, when he was better informed concerning the mind of God. 2. These promises God faithfully performed to David and his seed, in due time. Though David came short of making good his purpose to build God a house, yet God did not come short of making good his promise to build him a house. Such is the tenor of the covenant we are under; though there are many failures in our performances there are none in God's.

18. ¶ Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, who am I, O LORD God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? 19. And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O LORD God: but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and is this the manner of man, O LORD God? 20. And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, LORD God, knowest thy servant. 21. For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. 22. Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 23. And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people which thou redeemest to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? 24. For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God. 25. And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said. 26. And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, the LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. 27. For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hast thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. 28. And now, O LORD God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant. 29. Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou O LORD God, hast spoken it, and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.

We have here the solemn address David made to God, in answer to the gracious message God had sent him. We are not told what he said to Nathan; no doubt he received him very kindly and respectfully, as the messenger, but his answer to God he brought himself, and did not send by Nathan. When ministers deliver God's message to us, it is not to them, but to God, that our hearts must reply; he understands the language of the heart, and to him we may come boldly. David had no sooner received the message, but while the impression of it were fresh he retired to return an answer. Observe,

1. The place he retired to; he went in before the Lord, i. e. into the tabernacle where the ark was, which was the token of God's presence; before that he presented himself. God's will now is, that men pray every where, but wherever we pray, we must set ourselves as before the Lord, and let him before us.

2. The posture he put himself into, he sat before the Lord. 1. It notes the posture of his body. Kneeling or standing are certainly the most proper gestures to be used in prayer; but the Jews from this instance say, it was allowed to the kings of the house of David to sit in the temple, and to no other. But this will by no means justify the ordinary use of that gesture in prayer, whatever may be allowed in a case of necessity. David went in and took his place before the Lord, so it may be read; but when he prayed he stood up as the manner was. Or, he went in and continued before the Lord; stood some time silently meditating, before he began his prayer, and then remained longer than usual in the tabernacle. Or, 2. It may note the frame of his spirit at this time. He went and composed himself before the Lord; thus we should do in all our approaches to God; O God my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed.

3. The prayer itself, which is full of the breathings of pious and devout affection towards God.

1. He speaks very humble of himself, and his own merits. So he begins as one astonished, *Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house,* ver. 18. God had minded him of the meanness of his original, ver. 8. and he subscribed to it; he had low thoughts, (1.) Of his personal merits, *who am I?* He was upon all accounts a very considerable, valuable man: His endowments both of body and mind were extraordinary: His gifts and graces eminent: He was a man of honour, success and usefulness, the darling of his country, and the dread of his enemies, and yet when he comes to speak of himself before God, *who am I?* A man not worth taking notice of. (2.) Of the merits of his family: *What is my house?* His house was of the royal tribe, and descended from the prince of that tribe; he was allied to the best families of the country, and yet, like Gideon, thinks his family poor in Judah, and himself the least in his father's house, Judg. vi. 15. David thus humbled himself, when Saul's daughter was mentioned to him for a wife, 1 Sam. xviii. 18. but now with much more reason. Note, It very well becomes the greatest and best of men, even in the midst of the highest advancements, to have low and mean thoughts of themselves. For the greatest of men are worms, the best are sinners, and those that are highest advanced have nothing but what they have received; *Who am I, that thou hast brought me hitherto?* Brought me to the kingdom, and to a settlement in it, and rest from all mine enemies? It intimates, that he could not have reached this himself by his own management, if God had not brought him to it. All our attainments must be looked upon as God's vouchsafements.

2. He speaks very highly and honourably of God's favours to him. 1. In what he had done for him, *Thou hast brought me hitherto*, to this great dignity and dominion. Hitherto thou hast helped me. Though we should be left at an uncertainty concerning further mercy, we have great reason to be thankful for that which has been done for us hitherto, Acts xxvi. 22. 2. In what he had yet further promised him. God had done great things for him already, and yet as if those had been nothing, he had promised to do much more, ver. 19. Note, What God has laid out upon his people is much, but what he has laid up for them is infinitely more, *Psalms xxxi.* 19. The present graces and comforts of the saints are invaluable gifts, and yet, as if these were too little for God to bestow upon his children, he hath spoken concerning them for a great while to come, even as far as eternity itself reaches. Of this we must own, as David here, (1.) That it is far beyond what we could expect. *Is this the manner of men?* That is, 1. Can man expect to be so dealt with by his Maker? *Is this the law of Adam?* Note, considering what the character and condition of man is, it is very surprising and amazing that God should deal with him as he doth. Man is a mean creature, and therefore under a law of distance; unprofitable to God, and therefore under a law of desecum and disregard; guilty and obnoxious, and therefore under a law of death and damnation: but how unlike are God's dealings with man to this law of Adam! He is brought near to God, purchased at a high rate; taken into covenant and communion with God: Could this ever have been thought of? 2. Do men use to deal thus with one another? No, the way of our God is far above the manner of men. Though he be high, he has respect to the lowly, and is this the manner of men? Though he is offended by us, he beseeches us to be reconciled; waits to be gracious, multiplies his pardons: and is this the manner of men? Some give another sense of this, reading it thus: *And is this the law of man, the Lord Jehovah:* i. e. This promise of one, whose kingdom shall be established for ever, must be understood of one that is a man, and yet the Lord Jehovah, this must be the law of such a one: a Messiah from my loins must be man, but reigning for ever must be God. (2.) That beyond this, there is nothing we can desire. *And what can David say more unto thee?* ver. 20. What can I ask, or wish for more? *Thou, Lord, knowest thy servant*, knowest what will make me happy, and what thou hast promised is enough to do so. The promise of Christ includes all, if that man, the Lord God, be ours, what can we ask, or think of more? Eph. iii. 20. The promises of the covenant of grace are framed by him that knows us, and therefore knows how to adapt them to every branch of our necessity. He knows us better than we know ourselves, and therefore let us be satisfied with the provision he has made for us; what can we say more for ourselves in our prayers, than he has said for us in his promises?

3. He ascribes all to the free grace of God, ver. 21. Both the great things he had done for him, and the great things he had made known to him. All was, (1.) For his word's sake, i. e. For the sake of Christ the eternal word; it is all owing to his merit: Or, that thou mayest magnify thy word of promise above all thy name, in making it the stay and storehouse of the people. (2.) According to thy own heart, thy gracious counsels and designs, *ex mero motu*; *Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes.* All that God doth for his people in his providence, and secures to them in his promises, is for his pleasure and for his praise, the pleasure of his will and the praise of his word.

4. He adores the greatness and glory of God, ver. 22. *Thou art great, O Lord God, for there is none like thee.* God's gracious condescension to him; and the honour he had put upon him, did not at all abate his awful veneration for the Divine Majesty; for the nearer they are brought to God, the more they see of his glory; and the dearer we are in his eyes, the greater he should be in ours. And this we must acknowledge concerning God, that there is no Being like him, nor any God beside him; and that what we have

of building a habitation for the ark. 1. Thus he would make a grateful return for the honours God had put upon him. Note, When God in his providence has remarkably done much for us, it should put us upon contriving what we may do for him and his glory. *What shall I render unto the Lord?* 2. Thus he would improve the present calm, and make a good use of the rest God had given him. Now he was not called out to serve God and Israel in the high places of the field, he would employ his thoughts, and time, and estate, in serving him another way, and not indulge himself in ease, much less in luxury. When God in his providence gives us rest, and finds us little to do of worldly business, we must do so much the more for God and our souls. How different were the thoughts of David, when he sat in his palace, from Nebuchadnezzar's, when he walked in his? Dan. iv. 29. That proud man thought of nothing but the might of his own power, and the honour of his own majesty; this humble soul is full of contrivance how to glorify God, and give honour to him; and how God retributed the proud, and gave grace and glory to the humble, the event shewed. David considered, ver. 2. the stateliness of his own habitation: *I dwell in a house of cedar*; and compared with that the meanness of the habitation of the ark, that dwells within curtains; and thought this incongruous, that he should dwell in a palace and the ark in a tent. David had been uneasy till he found out a place for the ark, Psalm cxxxii. 4, 5. and now he is uneasy till he finds out a better place. Gracious grateful souls, (1.) Never think they can do enough for God, but when they have done much, are still projecting to do more, and devising liberal things. (2.) They cannot enjoy their own accommodations while they see the church of God in distress and under a cloud. David can take little pleasure in a house of cedar for himself, unless the ark have one. Those who stretched themselves upon beds of ivory, and were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph, though they had David's music, had not David's spirit, Amos vi. 4—6. nor they who dwell in their ceiled houses, while God's house lay waste.

3. His communicating this thought to Nathan the prophet. He told him, as a friend and confidant whom he used to advise with. Could not David have gone about it himself? Was it not a good work? Was not he himself a prophet? Yes, but *in multitude of counsellors there is safety*. David told him, that by him he might know the mind of God. It was certainly a good work, but it was uncertain whether it was the will of God that David should have the doing of it.

4. Nathan's approbation of it. *Go, do all that is in thine heart, for the Lord is with thee*, ver. 3. We do not find that David told him he purposed to build a temple, only that it was a trouble to him there was not one built; from which Nathan easily gathered what was in his heart, and bid him go on and prosper. Note, We ought to do all we can to encourage and promote the good purposes and designs of others, and put in a good word, as we have opportunity, to forward a good work. Nathan spoke this, not in God's name, but as from himself; not as a prophet, but as a wise and good man; it was agreeable to the revealed will of God, which requires that all in their places should lay out themselves for the advancement of religion and the service of God, though, it seems, the secret will was otherwise, that David should not do this. It was Christ's prerogative always to speak the mind of God, which he perfectly knew; other prophets spoke it only when the spirit of prophecy was upon them; but, if any thing they mislook, as Samuel, 1 Sam. xvi. 6. and Nathan here, God soon rectified the mistake.

4. ¶ And it came to pass that night, that the word of the LORD came unto Nathan, saying, 5. Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? 6. Whereas I have not dwelt in any house, since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent, and in a tabernacle. 7. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel, spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar? 8. Now therefore, so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheep-cote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel. 9. And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. 10. (Moreover, I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more: neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime. 11. And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies.) Also the LORD telleth thee, that he will make thee an house. 12. ¶ And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. 13. He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. 14. I will be his father, and he shall be my son; if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: 15. But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. 16. And thine house, and thy kingdom, shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. 17. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

We have here a full revelation of God's favour to David, and the kind intentions of that favour; the notices and assurances of which God sent him by Nathan the prophet, whom he intrusted to deliver this long message to him. The design of it is to take him off from his purpose of building the

temple, and was therefore sent, 1. By the same hand that had given him encouragement to do it; lest, if it had been sent by any other, Nathan should have been despised and insulted over, and David should have been perplexed, being encouraged by one prophet, and discouraged by another. 2. The same night, that Nathan might not continue long in an error, nor David have his head any further misled with thoughts of that which he must never bring to pass. God might have said this to David himself immediately, but he chose to send it by Nathan to support the honour of his prophets, and to preserve in David a regard to them; though he be the head, they must be the eyes, by whom he must see the visions of the Almighty, and the tongue by which he must hear the word of God. He that delivereth this long message to Nathan, assisted his memory to retain it, that he might deliver it fully, (he being resolved to deliver it faithfully) as he received it of the Lord.

Now in this message, 1. David's purpose to build God a house is superseded: God took notice of that purpose, for he knows what is in man; and he was well pleased with it; as appears 1 Kings viii. 18. *Thou didst well that it was in thine heart*; yet he forbade him to go on with his purpose, ver. 3. *Shalt thou build me an house?* No, *thou shalt not*, as it is explained in the parallel place, 1 Chron. xvii. 1. There is other work appointed for thee to do, which must be done first. David is a man of war, and he must enlarge the borders of Israel, by carrying on their conquests. David is a sweet psalmist, and he must prepare psalms for the use of the temple when it is built, and settle the courses of the Levites; but for building the house, his son's genius will lie more that way, and he will have a better treasure to bear the charge of it, and therefore let it be reserved for him to do. *As every man hath received the gift, so let him minister*.

The building of a temple was to be a work of time, and preparation made for it; but it was a thing that had never been spoken of till now. God tells him, 1. That hitherto he never had had a house built for him, ver. 6. a tabernacle had served hitherto, and it might serve a while longer. God matters not outward pomp in his service; his presence was as sure with his people when the ark was in a tent, as when it was in a temple; David was uneasy that the ark was in curtains, a mean and moveable habitation, but God never complained of it as any uneasiness to him. He did not dwell, but walk, and yet faint not, nor was weary. Christ, like the ark, when here on earth, walked in a tent and tabernacle, for he *went about doing good*, and dwelt not in any house of his own, till he ascended on high, to the mansions above, in his Father's house, and there he sat down. The church like the ark, in this world is ambulatory, dwells in a tent, because its present state is both pastoral and military, its continuing city is to come. David in his psalms often calls the tabernacle a temple, as Psalm v. 7. xxvii. 4. xxix. 9. lxxv. 4. cxxxviii. 2. because it answered the intention of a temple, though it was made but of curtains: wife and good men value not the shew, while they have the substance. David perhaps had more true devotion, and sweeter communion with God in a house of curtains, than any of his successors in the house of cedar. 2. That he had never given any orders or directions, or the least intimation, to any of the sceptres of Israel, i. e. to any of the judges, 1 Chron. xvii. 6. (for rulers are called sceptres, Ezek. xix. 14. the great ruler is called so, Num. xxiv. 17.) concerning the building of the temple, ver. 7. That worship only is acceptable which is instituted, why should David therefore design what God never ordained? Let him wait for a warrant, and then let him do it. Better a tent of God's appointing, than a temple of his own inventing.

2. David is minded of the great things God had done for him, to let him know that he was a favourite of heaven, though he had not the favour to be employed in this service: as also that God was not indebted to him for his good intentions; but whatever he did for God's honour, God was beforehand with him, ver. 8, 9. He had raised him from a very mean and low condition; *Took him from the sheep-cote*. It is good for those who are come to great preferment, to be often minded of their small beginnings, that they may always be humble and thankful. 2. He had given him success and victory over his enemies, ver. 10. *I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest*, to protect thee when pursued, to prosper thee when pursuing; *I have cut off all thine enemies*, that stood in the way of thine advancement and settlement. 3. He had crowned him not only with power and dominion in Israel, but with honour and reputation among the nations about; *I have made thee a great name*: He was become famous for his courage, conduct, and great achievements, and was more talked of than any of the great men of his day. A great name is what they who have, have great reason to be thankful for, and may improve to good purposes; but what they that have not, have no reason to be ambitious of; a good name is more desirable. A man may pass through the world very obscurely, and yet very comfortably.

3. A happy establishment is promised to God's Israel, ver. 10, 11. This comes in in a parenthesis, before the promises made to David in itself, to let him understand, that what God designed to do for him was for Israel's sake, that they might be happy under his administration, and to give him the satisfaction of foreseeing peace upon Israel, when it was promised him that he should *be his children's children*, Psalm cxxxviii. 6. A good king cannot think himself happy unless his kingdom be so. The promises that follow, relate to his family and posterity, these therefore that speak of the settlement of Israel, intend the happiness of his own reign. Two things are promised. 1. A quiet place; *I will appoint a place for my people Israel*. It was appointed long ago, yet they were disappointed, but now that appointment should be made good. Canaan should be clearly their own, without any ejection or molestation. 2. A quiet enjoyment of that place; the *children of wickedness*, meaning especially the Philistines, who had been so long a plague to them, *shall not afflict them any more*: But, as in the time that I caused judges to be over my people Israel, *I will cause thee to rest from all thine enemies*, to ver. 11. may be read, i. e. I will continue and complete that rest; the land shall rest from war, as it did under the judges.

4. Blessings are intailed upon the family and posterity of David. David had purposed to build God a house, and, in requital, God promised to build him a house, ver. 11. whatever we do for God, or sincerely design to do, though providence prevents our doing it, we shall in no wise lose our reward. He had promised to make him a name, ver. 9. here he promiseth to make him a house, which should bear up that name. It would be a great satisfaction to David, while he lived, to have the inviolable assurance of a divine promise, that his family should flourish when he is gone. Next to the happiness of our souls, and the church of God, we would desire the happiness of our seed, that those who come of us, may be praising God on earth, when we are praising him in heaven.

1. Some of these promises relate to Solomon, his immediate successor, and to the royal line of Judah. 1. That God would advance him to the throne. Those words, *when the days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers*, intimate, that David himself should come to his grave in peace; and then *I will set up thy seed*. This favour was so much the greater, because it was more than God had done for Moses, or Joshua, or any of the judges whom he called to feed his people. David's government was the first that

was entailed, for the promise made to Christ, for the kingdom, was to reach to his spiritual seed: *If children, then heirs.* 2. That he would settle him in the throne. *I will establish his kingdom,* ver. 12. *The throne of his kingdom,* ver. 13. His title shall be clear and uncontested, his interest confirmed and his administration steady. 3. That he would employ him in that good work of building the temple, which David had only the satisfaction of designing. *He shall build a house for my name,* ver. 13. The work shall be done though David should not have the doing of it. 4. That he would take him into the covenant of adoption, ver. 14, 15. *I will be his father and he shall be my son.* We need no more to make us and ours happy, but to have God to be a father to us and them: and all those to whom God is a father, he doth by his grace make his sons by giving them the disposition of children. If he be a careful, tender, bountiful father to us, we must be obedient tractable, dutiful children to him. The promise here speaks as unto sons. (1.) That his father would correct him, where there was occasion, for *what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?* Afflictions are an article of the covenant, and are not only consistent with, but flow from God's fatherly love. *If he commit iniquity,* as it proved he did, (1 Kings xi. 1.) *I will chasten him* to bring him to repentance, but it shall be *with the rod of men*; such a rod as men may wield, and not *plead against him with the greater power of a God,* Job xxiii. 6. Or rather such a rod as men may bear. I will consider his frame, and correct him with all possible tenderness and compassion, when there is need, and no more than there is need; it shall be *with the stripes, the touches* (so the word is) *of the children of men*; not a stroke or wound, but a gentle touch. (2.) That yet he would not dishonour him, ver. 15. *my mercy* (and that is the inheritance of sons) *shall not depart from him.* The revolt of the ten tribes from the house of David was their correction for iniquity, but the constant adherence of the other two to that family, which was a competent support of the royal dignity, perpetuated the mercy of God to the seed of David, according to this promise; though that family was cut short yet it was not cut off, as the house of Saul was. Never any other family swayed the sceptre of Judah, but that of David only. This is that covenant of royalty celebrated, *Psalms lxxxix. 3, &c.* as typical of the covenant of redemption and grace.

2. Others of them relate to Christ, who is often called *David*, and the *son of David*: that son of David to whom those promises pointed, and in whom they had their full accomplishment. He was of the *seed of David*, Acts xiii. 23. To whom God gave the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32. All power both in heaven and earth, and authority, to execute judgment. He was to build the gospel temple, a *house for God's name*, Zech. vi. 12, 13. That promise, *I will be his father, and he shall be my son*, is expressly applied to Christ by the apostle, *Heb. i. 5.* But the establishing of his house, and his throne, and his kingdom for ever, ver. 13, and again, and a third time, ver. 16, for ever, can be applied to no other but Christ and his kingdom; David's house and kingdom are long since come to an end, it is only the Messiah's kingdom that is everlasting, and of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. The supposition of committing iniquity cannot be applied to the Messiah himself, but it is applicable (and very comfortably) in his spiritual seed; true believers have their iniquities, for which they may expect to be corrected, but they shall not be cast off. Every transgression in the covenant will not throw us out of covenant.

Now, 1. This message Nathan faithfully delivered to David, ver. 17. though in forbidding him to build the temple, he contradicted his own words, yet he was not backward to do it, when he was better informed concerning the mind of God. 2. These promises God faithfully performed to David and his seed, in due time. Though David came short of making good his purpose to build God a house, yet God did not come short of making good his promise to build him a house. Such is the tenor of the covenant we are under; though there are many failures in our performances there are none in God's.

18. ¶ Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, who am I, O LORD God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? 19. And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O LORD God: but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and is this the manner of man, O LORD God? 20. And what can David say more unto thee? for thou, LORD God, knowest thy servant. 21. For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. 22. Wherefore thou art great, O LORD God: for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 23. And what one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people which thou redeemest to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods? 24. For thou hast confirmed to thyself thy people Israel to be a people unto thee for ever: and thou, LORD, art become their God. 25. And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish it for ever, and do as thou hast said. 26. And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, the LORD of hosts is the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. 27. For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hast thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee. 28. And now, O LORD God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant. 29. Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee: for thou O LORD God, hast spoken it, and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever.

We have here the solemn address David made to God, in answer to the gracious message God had sent him. We are not told what he said to Nathan; no doubt he received him very kindly and respectfully, as the messenger, but his answer to God he brought himself, and did not lead by Nathan. When ministers deliver God's message to us, it is not to them, but to God, that our hearts must reply; he understands the language of the heart, and to him we may come boldly. David had no sooner received the message, but while the impression of it were fresh he retired to return an answer. Observe,

1. The place he retired to; he went in before the Lord, i. e. into the tabernacle where the ark was, which was the token of God's presence; before that he presented himself. God's will now is, that men pray every where, but wherever we pray, we must let ourselves as before the Lord, and let him before us.

2. The posture he put himself into, he sat before the Lord. 1. It notes the posture of his body. Kneeling or standing are certainly the most proper gestures to be used in prayer; but the Jews from this instance say, it was allowed to the kings of the house of David to sit in the temple, and to no other. But this will by no means justify the ordinary use of that gesture in prayer, whatever may be allowed in a case of necessity. David went in and took his place before the Lord, so it may be read; but when he prayed he stood up as the manner was. Or, he went in and continued before the Lord; stood some time silently meditating, before he began his prayer, and then remained longer than usual in the tabernacle. Or, 2. It may note the frame of his spirit at this time. He went and composed himself before the Lord; thus we should do in all our approaches to God; *O God my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed.*

3. The prayer itself, which is full of the breathings of pious and devout affection towards God.

1. He speaks very humble of himself, and his own merits. So he begins as one astonished, *Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house,* ver. 18. God had minded him of the meanness of his original, ver. 8. and he subscribed to it; he had low thoughts, (1.) Of his personal merits, *who am I?* He was upon all accounts a very considerable, valuable man: His endowments both of body and mind were extraordinary: His gifts and graces eminent: He was a man of honour, success and usefulness, the darling of his country, and the dread of his enemies, and yet when he comes to speak of himself before God, *who am I?* A man not worth taking notice of. (2.) Of the merits of his family: *What is my house?* His house was of the royal tribe, and descended from the prince of that tribe; he was allied to the best families of the country, and yet, like Gideon, thinks his family poor in Judah, and himself *the least in his father's house*, Judg. vi. 15. David thus humbled himself, when Saul's daughter was mentioned to him for a wife, 1 Sam. xvi. 18. but now with much more reason. Note, It very well becomes the greatest and best of men, even in the midst of the highest advancements, to have low and mean thoughts of themselves. For the greatest of men are worms, the best are sinners, and those that are highest advanced have nothing but what they have received; *Who am I, that thou hast brought me hitherto?* Brought me to the kingdom, and to a settlement in it, and rest from all mine enemies? It intimates, that he could not have reached this himself by his own management, if God had not brought him to it. All our attainments must be looked upon as God's vouchsafements.

2. He speaks very highly and honourably of God's favours to him. 1. In what he had done for him, *Thou hast brought me hitherto*, to this great dignity and dominion. Hitherto thou hast helped me. Though we should be left at an uncertainty concerning further mercy, we have great reason to be thankful for that which has been done for us hitherto, Acts xxvi. 22. 2. In what he had yet further promised him. God had done great things for him already, and yet as if those had been nothing, he had promised to do much more, ver. 19. Note, What God has laid out upon his people is much, but what he has laid up for them is infinitely more, *Psalms cxxi. 19.* The present graces and comforts of the saints are invaluable gifts, and yet, as if these were too little for God to bestow upon his children, he hath spoken concerning them for a great while to come, even as far as eternity itself reaches. Of this we must own, as David here, (1.) That it is far beyond what we could expect. *Is this the manner of men?* That is, 1. Can man expect to be so dealt with by his Maker? *Is this the law of Adam?* Note, considering what the character and condition of man is, it is very surprising and amazing that God should deal with him as he doth. Man is a mean creature, and therefore under a law of distance; unprofitable to God, and therefore under a law of desecum and disregard; guilty and obnoxious, and therefore under a law of death and damnation; but how unlike are God's dealings with man to this law of Adam! He is brought near to God, purchased at a high rate; taken into covenant and communion with God: Could this ever have been thought of? 2. Do men use to deal thus with one another? No, the way of our God is far above the manner of men. Though he be high, he has respect to the lowly, and is this the manner of men? Though he is offended by us, he beseeches us to be reconciled; waits to be gracious, multiplies his pardons: and is this the manner of men? Some give another rule of this, reading it thus: *And is this the law of man, the Lord Jehovah:* i. e. This promise of one, whose kingdom shall be established for ever, must be understood of one that is a man, and yet the Lord Jehovah; this must be the law of such a one: a Messiah from my loins must be man, but reigning for ever must be God. (2.) That beyond this, there is nothing we can desire. *And what can David say more unto thee?* ver. 20. What can I ask, or wish for more? *Thou, Lord, knowest thy servant*, knowest what will make me happy, and what thou hast promised is enough to do so. The promise of Christ includes all, if that man, the Lord God, be ours, what can we ask, or think of more? *Eph. iii. 20.* The promises of the covenant of grace are framed by him that knows us, and therefore knows how to adapt them to every branch of our necessity. He knows us better than we know ourselves, and therefore let us be satisfied with the provision he has made for us; what can we say more for ourselves in our prayers, than he has said for us in his promises?

3. He ascribes all to the free grace of God, ver. 21. Both the great things he had done for him, and the great things he had made known to him. All was, (1.) For his word's sake, i. e. For the sake of Christ the eternal word; it is all owing to his merit: Or, that thou mayest magnify thy word of promise above all thy name, in making it the stay and storehouse of the people. (2.) According to thy own heart, thy gracious counsels and designs, *ex mero motu*; *Euen so, Father, because it seemed good in thine eyes.* All that God doth for his people in his providence, and secures to them in his promises, is for his pleasure and for his praise, the pleasure of his will and the praise of his word.

4. He adores the greatness and glory of God, ver. 22. *Thou art great, O Lord God, for there is none like thee.* God's gracious condescension to him, and the honour he had put upon him, did not at all abate his awful veneration for the Divine Majesty; for the nearer they are brought to God, the more they see of his glory; and the nearer we are in his eyes, the greater he should be in ours. And this we must acknowledge concerning God, that there is no Being like him, nor any God beside him; and that what we have

have seen with our eyes, of his power and goodness, is according to all that we have heard with our ears, and the one half not told us.

5. He expresseth a great esteem of the Israel of God, *ver. 23, 24.* As there was none among the gods to be compared with Jehovah, so none among the nations to be compared with Israel; considering, (1.) The works he had done for them. He went to redeem them, applied himself to it as a great work, went about it with solemnity. *Elohim hulecu, dii iterunt.* God they went. As if there were the same consultation and concurrence of all the persons in the blessed Trinity, about the work of redemption, that there was about the work of creation, when God saith, *Let us make man.* "Whom they that were sent of God went to redeem," so the Chaldees, meaning, I suppose, Moses and Aaron. The redemption of Israel, as described here, was typical of our redemption, by Christ, in that, 1. They were redeemed from the nations and their gods, so are we from all iniquity, and all conformity to this present world; Christ came to save his people from their sins. 2. They were redeemed to be a people unto God, purified and appropriated to himself; that he might make himself a great name, and do for them great things; the honour of God and the eternal happiness of the saints, are the two things aimed at in their redemption. 2. The covenant he had made with them, *ver. 24.* It was (1.) mutual; they to be a people to thee, and thou to be a God to them; all their interests consecrated to thee, and all thine attributes engaged for them. (2.) Immutible, thou hast confirmed them. He that makes the covenant makes it sure, and will make it good.

6. He concludes with humble petitions to God.

1. He grounds his petition upon the message which God had sent him; *ver. 27.* *Thou hast revealed this to thy servant,* i. e. Thou hast of thine own good will given me the promise, that thou wilt build me an house, else I could never have found in my heart to pray such a prayer as this: I durst not have asked such great things, if I had not been directed and encouraged by thy promise to ask them; they are indeed too great for me to beg, but not too great for thee to give. Thy servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer; so it is in the original and the Septuagint. Many when they go to pray have their hearts to seek, but David's heart was found, i. e. it was fixed: gathered in from its wanderings, and entirely engaged to the duty, and employment in it. That prayer that is found in the tongue only, will not please God, it must be found in the heart, that must be lifted up and poured out before God. *My son, give God thy heart.*

2. He builds his faith, and hopes to speed upon the fidelity of God's promise, *ver. 25.* *Thou art that God, thou art he, even that God; the Lord of hosts, and God of Israel:* Or, *that God whose words are true,* that God whom we may depend upon; and *thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant,* which I am therefore bold to pray for.

3. Thence he fetcheth the matter of his prayer, and refers himself to that, as the guide of his prayers.

1. He prays for the performance of his promise, *ver. 25.* Let the word be made good to me, *on which thou hast caused me to hope,* Psalm cxix. 49. *and do as thou hast said;* I desire no more, and I expect no less; so full is the promise, and so firm. Thus we must turn God's promises into prayers, and then they shall be turned into performances; for, with God, saying and doing are not two things as they often are with men; God will do as he hath said.

1. He prays for the glorifying of God's name, *ver. 26.* *Let thy name be magnified for ever;* this ought to be the summary of the centre of all our prayers, the Alpha and Omega of them; begin with *hallowed be thy name,* and end with *thine is the glory for ever:* Whether I be magnified or no, *let thy name be magnified:* And he reckons nothing magnifies God's name more than this, to say with suitable affections, *The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel.* This speaks the *God of Israel gloriously great,* that he is the *Lord of hosts;* and this speaks the *Lord of hosts gloriously good,* that is *God over Israel;* in both, *let his name be magnified for ever:* Let all the creatures and all the churches give him the glory of these two. David desired the performance of God's promise for the honour, not of his own name, but of God's: Thus the son of David prayed, *Father, glorify thy name,* John xii. 28. and *chap. xvii. 1.* *Glorify thy son, that thy son may also glorify thee.*

3. He prays for his house, for to that the promise hath special reference: 1. That it might be happy, *ver. 29.* *Let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant,* and again, *with thy blessing, let the house of thy servant be truly and eternally blessed.* Those whom thou blest, they are blessed indeed. The care of good men is very much concerning their families, and the best entail on their families is that of the blessing of God. The repetition of this request is not a vain repetition, but expressive of the value he had of the divine blessing, and his earnest desire of it, as all in all to the happiness of his family. 2. That the happiness of it might remain. Let it be *established before thee,* *ver. 28.* Let it *continue for ever before thee,* *ver. 29.* He prays, 1. That the entail of the crown might not be cut off, but remain in his family; that none of his might ever forfeit it, but that they might walk before God, and that would be their establishment. 2. That his kingdom might have its perfection and perpetuity in the kingdom of the Messiah. When Christ for ever sat down on the right hand of God, (*Heb. x. 12.*) and received all possible assurance, that his seed and throne shall be as the days of heaven; this prayer of David the son of Jesse for his seed was abundantly answered, that it might *continue before God for ever.* See *Psal. lxxii. ult.* The perpetuity of the Messiah's kingdom, is the desire and faith of all good people.

C H A P. VIII.

David having fought first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, settling the ark as soon as he was himself well settled, we are here told how all other things were added to him. Here is an account, 1. Of his conquests. He triumphed, (1.) Over the Philistines, *ver. 1.* (2.) Over the Moabites, *ver. 2.* (3.) Over the king of Zobah, *ver. 3, 4.* (4.) Over the Syrians, *ver. 5—8—13.* (5.) Over the Edomites, *ver. 14.* 2. Of the presents that were brought him, and the wealth he got from the nations he subdued, which he dedicated to God, *ver. 9—12.* 3. Of his court, the administration of his government, *ver. 15.* and his chief officers, *ver. 16—18.* This gives us a general idea of the prosperity of David's reign.

1. AND after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines. 2. And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground: even with two lines measured he, to put to death; and with one full line to

keep alive: and so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts. 3. David smote also Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates. 4. And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horse-men, and twenty thousand foot-men: and David houghed all the chariot-horses, but reserved of them for an hundred chariots. 5. And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men. 6. Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David and brought gifts: and the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went. 7. And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. 8. And from Bethah, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass.

God had given David rest from all his enemies that opposed him and made head against him, and he having made a good use of that rest, has now commission given him to make war upon them, and to act offensively for the revenging of Israel's quarrels and the recovery of their rights: For as yet they were not in full possession of that country, which by the promise of God they were entitled to.

1. He quite subdued the Philistines, *ver. 1.* They had attacked him when they thought him weak, *chap. v. 17.* and went by the worst then; but when he found himself strong he attacked them, and made himself master of their country. They had long been vexatious and oppressive to Israel, Saul got no ground against them, but David completed Israel's deliverance out of their hands, which Samson had begun long before, *Judg. xiii. 5.* Metheg-ammah was Gath, (the chief and royal city of the Philistines) and the towns belonging to it, among which there was a constant garrison kept by the Philistines on the hill Ammah, (*2 Sam. ii. 29.*) which was Metheg, a bridle (so it signifies) or curb upon the people of Israel; this David took out of their hand, and used it as a curb upon them. Thus when the strong man is disarmed the armour wherein he trusted is taken from him, and used against him, *Luke xi. 22.* And after the long and frequent struggles, which the saints have had with the powers of darkness, like Israel with the Philistines, *the son of David shall tread them all under their feet and make them more than conquerors.*

2. He smote the Moabites, and made them tributaries to Israel, *ver. 2.* He divided the country into three parts; two of which he destroyed, casting down the strongholds, and putting all to the sword: the third part he spared to till the ground, and be servants to Israel. Dr. Lightfoot saith, he laid them on the ground, and measured them with a cord, who should be slain, and who should live: and this is called, *meeting out the valley of Succoth,* *Psal. lx. 6.* The Jews say, he used this severity with the Moabites, because they had slain his parents, and brethren, whom he put under the protection of the king of Moab during his exile, *1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4.* He did it in justice, because they had been, and in policy, because, if left in their strength, they still would have been dangerous enemies to the Israel of God. But observe, though it was necessary two thirds should be cut off, yet the line that was to keep alive, though it was but one, is ordered to be a full line: Be sure give that length enough: let the line of mercy be stretched to the utmost in *favourum vitæ*, acts of indemnity must be construed so as to enlarge the favour. Now Baalam's prophecy was fulfilled, *a sceptre shall arise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab,* to the utmost of which the fatal line extended, *Numb. xxiv. 17.* The Moabites continued tributaries to Israel till after the death of Ahab, *2 Kings iii. 4, 5.* then they rebelled and were never reduced.

3. He smote the Syrians, or Amorites: of them there were two distinct kingdoms, as we find them spoken of in the title of the sixtieth *Psal. Aram Naharaim, Syria of the rivers,* whose head city was Damascus, (named for its rivers, *2 Kings v. 12*) and Aram Zobah which joined to it, but extended to Euphrates. These were the two northern crowns. 1. David began with the Syrians of Zobah, *ver. 3, 4.* As he went to settle his border at the river Euphrates (for so far the land conveyed by the divine grant to Abraham and his seed did extend, *Gen. xv. 18.*) the king of Zobah opposed him, being himself possessed of those countries which belonged to Israel; but David routed his forces, took his chariots and horsemen. The horsemen are here said to be seven hundred, but *1 Chron. xviii. 4.* seven thousand. If they divided their horse by ten in a company, as it is probable they did, the captains and companies were seven hundred, but the horsemen were seven thousand. David houghed the horses, cut the sinews of their hams, and so lamed them, and made them unserviceable, at least in war, God having forbidden them to *multiply horses,* *Deut. xvii. 16.* David reserved only one hundred chariots out of one thousand for his own use, for he placed his strength not in chariots or horses, but in the living God, *Psal. xx. 7.* and wrote it from his own observation, that *a horse is a vain thing for safety,* *Psal. xxxiii. 16, 17.* 2. The Syrians of Damascus coming in to the relief of the king of Zobah, fell with him. Twenty-two thousand were slain in the field, *ver. 5.* So that it was easy for David to make himself master of the country, and garrison it for himself, *ver. 6.* The enemies of God's church, that think to secure themselves, will prove in the end to ruin themselves, by their confederacies with each other. *Associate yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces,* *Isa. viii. 9.*

In all those wars, 1. David was protected. *The Lord preserved him whithersoever he went.* It seems he went in person, and in the cause of God and Israel, jeopardied his own life in the high places of the field, but God covered his head in the day of battle, which he oft speaks of in his Psalms to the glory of God. 2. He was enriched. He took the shields of gold which the servants of Hadadezer had in their custody, *ver. 7.* and much brass from several cities of Syria, *ver. 8.* which he was intitled to not only *jure belli*, by the unconscionable right of the longest sword, Get it, and take it? but by commission from heaven, and the ancient entail of these countries on the seed of Abraham.

9. ¶ When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer, 10. Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him (for Hadadezer had wars with Toi) and Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold and vessels of brass; 11. Which also

king David did dedicate unto the LORD, with the silver and gold that he had dedicated of all nations which he subdued: 12. Of Syria, and of Moab, and of the children of Ammon, and of the Philistines, and of Amalek, and of the spoil of Hadadezer son of Rehob, king of Zobah. 13. And David gat him a name when he returned from smiting of the Syrians in the valley of salt, *being eighteen thousand men.* 14. ¶ And he put garrisons in Edom; throughout all Edom put he garrisons, and all they of Edom became David's servants: and the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

Here is, 1. The court made to David by the king of Hamath, who, it seems, was at this time in war with the king of Zobah: He, hearing of David's success against his enemy, sent his own son ambassador to him, ver. 9, 10, to congratulate his victory, to return him thanks for the favour he had done him, in breaking the power of one he was in fear of, and to beg his friendship; and thus not only secured but strengthened himself. And David lost nothing by taking this little prince under his protection, no more than the old Romans did by the like policy, for the wealth he had from the countries he conquered by way of spoil, he had from this by way of present or gratuity: *Vessels of silver and gold.* Better get by composition, than by compulsion.

2. The offering David made to God of the spoils of the nations, and all the rich things that were brought him. He dedicated all to the Lord, ver. 11, 12. This crowned all his victories, and made them far to out-shine Alexander's or Cesar's, that they fought their own glory, but he aimed at the glory of God: All the precious things he was master of were dedicated things, i. e. they were designed for the building of the temple; and a good omen it was of kindness to the Gentiles in the fulness of time, and of the making of God's house a house of prayer for all people, that the temple was built of the spoils and presents of Gentile nations. In allusion to which we find the kings of the earth bringing their glory and honour into the new Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 24. *Their gods of gold David burnt,* 2 Sam. v. 21, but their vessels of gold he dedicated; thus in the conquests of a soul, by the grace of the son of David, what stands in opposition to God must be destroyed, every lust mortified and crucified, but what may be made to him must be dedicated, and the property of it altered; even the merchandise and the hire must be *holiness to the Lord*, Isa. xxiii. ult. the gain consecrated to the Lord of the whole earth, Mic. iv. 13. and then it is truly our own, and most comfortable.

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15. And David reigned over all Israel, and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people. 16. And Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; 17. And Zadok the son of Abiathar, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests, and Seraiah was the scribe; 18. And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief rulers.

David was not so engaged, in his wars abroad, as to neglect the administration of the government at home. 1. His care extended itself to all the parts of his dominion. *He reigned over all Israel*, ver. 15. not only he had right to reign over all the tribes, but he did so; they were all safe under his protection, and shared in the fruits of his good government. 2. He did justice with an unbiassed unshaken hand; *he executed judgment unto all his people*; neither did wrong, or denied or delayed right to any. It speaks, (1.) His industry and close application to business; his easiness of access, and readiness to admit all addresses and appeals made to him: All his people even the meanest, and those of the most distant tribes, were welcome to his council-board. (2.) His impartiality, and the equity of his proceeding in administering justice; he never perverted justice for favour or affection, nor had respect to persons in judgment. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was faithful and true, and who doth in righteousness both judge and make war, Rev. xix. 11. See Psalm lxxii. 1, 2.

3. He kept good order, and good officers in his court. David being the first king that had an established government (for Saul's reign was short and unsettled) he had the forming of the model of the administration: in Saul's time we read of no other great officer but Abner, that was captain of the host; but David instituted more officers. Here is, 1. Two military officers: Joab that was general of the forces in the field, and Benaiah that was over the Cherethites and Pelethites, who were either the city trainbands, archers and slingers, to the Chaldee, or rather the life-guards, or standing force, that attended the king's person; the pretorian band; the militia: They were ready to do service at home, to assist in the administration

of justice, and to preserving the public peace; we find them employed in proclaiming Solomon, 1 Kings i. 38. (2.) Two ecclesiastical officers; Zadok and Ahimelech were priests, i. e. they were most employed in the priests work under Abiathar, the high-priest. (3.) Two civil officers, one that was recorder, or remembrancer, to put the king in mind of business in its season; he was prime minister of state, yet not intrusted with the custody of the king's conscience, as they say of our Lord Chancellor, but only of the king's memory; let the king be put in mind of business, and he would do it himself. Another that was scribe or secretary of state, that drew up public orders and dispatches, and recorded judgments given. Lastly, David's sons as they grew to be fit for business were made chief rulers; they had places of honour and trust assigned them, either in the household, or in the camp, or in the courts of justice, according as their genius led them: They were chief about the king; so it is explained, 1 Chron. xviii. 17. employed near them, that they might be under his eye. Our Lord Jesus has appointed officers in his kingdom, for his honour and the good of the community; when he ascended on high, *he gave these gifts*, Eph. iv. 11. *to every man his work*, Mark xiii. 34. David made his sons chief rulers, but all believers, Christ's spiritual seed, are better preferred, for they are made to our God kings and priests, Rev. i. 6.

C H A P. IX.

The only thing recorded in this chapter, is the kindness David shewed to Jonathan's seed for his sake. (1.) The kind enquiry he made after the remains of the house of Saul, and his discovery of Mephibosheth, ver. 1—4. (2.) The kind reception he gave to Mephibosheth, when he was brought to him, ver. 5—8. (3.) The kind provision he made for him and his, ver. 9—13.

1. AND David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake? 2. And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba: and when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. 3. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son which is lame on his feet. 4. And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Michar, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar. 5. ¶ Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar. 6. Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant. 7. And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness, for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father, and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. 8. And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?

Here is, 1. David's enquiry after the remains of the ruined house of Saul, ver. 1. This was a great while after his accession to the throne, for it should seem that Mephibosheth, who was but five years old when Saul died, had now a son born, ver. 12. David had too long forgot his obligations to Jonathan, but now at length they are brought to his mind. It is good sometimes to bethink ourselves, whether there be any promises or engagements that we have neglected to make good; better do it late than never. The brevitate which Paul gives us of the life of David is this, Acts xiii. 36. *he served his generation according to the will of God*, i. e. he was a man that made it his business to do good: witness this instance, where we may observe,

1. That he sought an opportunity to do good. He might perhaps have satisfied his conscience with the performance of his promise to Jonathan, if he had been only ready, upon request or application made to him by any of his seed, to help and succour them. But he doth more, he enquired of those about him first, ver. 1. and when he light of a person, that was likely to inform him, asked him particularly, *Is there any left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness?* ver. 3. *Is there yet any*, not only to whom I may shew justice, Numb. v. 8. but to whom I may shew kindness? Note, Good men should seek opportunities of doing good. The liberal deviseth liberal things, Isa. xxxii. 8. For many times, the most proper objects of our kindness and charity are such as will not be light on without enquiry. The most necessitous are the least clamorous.

2. Those he enquired after were the remains of the house of Saul, to whom he would shew kindness for Jonathan's sake; *Is there any left of the house of Saul?* Saul had had a very numerous family, 1 Chron. viii. 33. enow to replenish a country and yet so emptied, that none of it appeared; but it was come to this enquiry, *Is there any left?* See how the providence of God can empty full families; see how the sin of man will do it? Saul's was a bloody house, no marvel it was thus reduced, chap. xxi. 1. But though God visited the iniquity of the father upon the children, David would not. Is there any left that I can shew kindness to, not for Saul's own sake, but for Jonathan's?

(1.) Saul was David's sworn enemy, and yet he would shew kindness to his house with all his heart, and was forward to do it. He doth not say, *is there any left of the house of Saul*, that I may find some way to take them off, and prevent their giving disturbance to me or my successor. It was against Abimelech's mind, that any one was left of the house of Gideon, Judg. ix. 5. and against Athaliah's mind, that any one was left of the seed royal, 2 Chron. xxii. 10, 11. those were usurped governments. David's needed no such vile support: he was desirous to shew kindness to the house of Saul, not only because he trusted in God, and feared not what they could do unto him, but because he was of a charitable disposition, and forgave what they had done to him. Note, We must evidence the sincerity of our forgiving those that have been any way unjust or injurious to us, by being ready, as we have opportunity, to shew kindness both to them and their heirs. We must not only not avenge ourselves upon them, but we must love them,

have seen with our eyes, of his power and goodness, is according to all that we have heard with our ears, and the one half not told us.

5. He expresseth a great esteem of the Israel of God, *ver. 23, 24*. As there was none among the gods to be compared with Jehovah, so none among the nations to be compared with Israel; considering, (1.) The works he had done for them. He went to redeem them, applied himself to it as a great work, went about it with solemnity. *Elohim hulecu, dii iterunt. God they went.* As if there were the same consultation and concurrence of all the persons in the blessed Trinity, about the work of redemption, that there was about the work of creation, when God saith, *Let us make man.* "Whom they that were sent of God went to redeem," so the Chaldee, meaning, I suppose, Moses and Aaron. The redemption of Israel, as described here, was typical of our redemption, by Christ, in that, 1. They were redeemed from the nations and their gods, so are we from all iniquity, and all conformity to this present world; Christ came to save his people from their sins. 2. They were redeemed to be a people unto God, purified and appropriated to himself; that he might make himself a great name, and do for them great things; the honour of God and the eternal happiness of the saints, are the two things aimed at in their redemption. 3. The covenant he had made with them, *ver. 24*. It was (1.) mutual; they to be a people to thee, and thou to be a God to them; all their interests consecrated to thee, and all thine attributes engaged for them. (2.) Immutable, thou hast confirmed them. He that makes the covenant makes it sure, and will make it good.

6. He concludes with humble petitions to God.

1. He grounds his petition upon the message which God had sent him; *ver. 27*. *Thou hast revealed this to thy servant*, i. e. Thou hast of thine own good will given me the promise, that thou wilt build me an house, else I could never have found in my heart to pray such a prayer as this: I durst not have asked such great things, if I had not been directed and encouraged by thy promise to ask them; they are indeed too great for me to beg, but not too great for thee to give. Thy servant has found in his heart to pray this prayer; so it is in the original and the Septuagint. Many when they go to pray have their hearts to seek, but David's heart was found, i. e. it was fixed: gathered in from its wanderings, and entirely engaged to the duty, and employment in it. That prayer that is found in the tongue only, will not please God, it must be found in the heart, that must be lifted up and poured out before God. *My son, give God thy heart.*

2. He builds his faith, and hopes to speed upon the fidelity of God's promise, *ver. 25*. *Thou art that God, thou art he, even that God; the Lord of hosts, and God of Israel*: Or, *that God whose words are true*, that God whom we may depend upon; and *thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant*, which I am therefore bold to pray for.

3. Thence he fetcheth the matter of his prayer, and refers himself to that, as the guide of his prayers.

1. He prays for the performance of his promise, *ver. 25*. Let the word be made good to me, on which thou hast caused me to hope, Psalm cxix. 49. and do as thou hast said; I desire no more, and I expect no less; so full is the promise, and so firm. Thus we must turn God's promises into prayers, and then they shall be turned into performances; for, with God, saying and doing are not two things as they often are with men; God will do as he hath said.

1. He prays for the glorifying of God's name, *ver. 26*. *Let thy name be magnified for ever*; this ought to be the summary of all our prayers, the Alpha and Omega of them; begin with *hallowed be thy name*, and end with *thine is the glory for ever*: Whether I be magnified or no, let thy name be magnified; And he reckons nothing magnifies God's name more than this, to say with suitable affections, *The Lord of hosts is the God over Israel*. This speaks the God of Israel gloriously great, that he is the Lord of hosts; and this speaks the Lord of hosts gloriously good, that is God over Israel, in both, let his name be magnified for ever: Let all the creatures and all the churches give him the glory of these two. David desired the performance of God's promise for the honour, not of his own name, but of God's: Thus the son of David prayed, *Father, glorify thy name*, John xii. 28. and *chap. xvii. 1*. *Glorify thy son, that thy son may also glorify thee.*

3. He prays for his house, for to that the promise hath special reference: 1. That it might be happy, *ver. 29*. *Let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant*, and again, *with thy blessing, let the house of thy servant be truly and eternally blessed*. Those whom thou blest, they are blessed indeed. The care of good men is very much concerning their families, and the best entail on their families is that of the blessing of God. The repetition of this request is not a vain repetition, but expressive of the value he had of the divine blessing, and his earnest desire of it, as all in all to the happiness of his family. 2. That the happiness of it might remain. Let it be established before thee, *ver. 28*. Let it continue for ever before thee, *ver. 29*. He prays, 1. That the entail of the crown might not be cut off, but remain in his family; that none of his might ever forfeit it, but that they might walk before God, and that would be their establishment. 2. That his kingdom might have its perfection and perpetuity in the kingdom of the Messiah. When Christ for ever sat down on the right hand of God, (*Heb. x. 12*.) and received all possible assurance, that his seed and throne shall be as the days of heaven; this prayer of David the son of Jesse for his seed was abundantly answered, that it might continue before God for ever. See *Psal. lxxii. ult.* The perpetuity of the Messiah's kingdom, is the desire and faith of all good people.

C H A P. VIII.

David having sought first the kingdom of God and the righteousness thereof, settling the ark as soon as he was himself well settled, we are here told how all other things were added to him. Here is an account, 1. Of his conquests. He triumphed, (1.) Over the Philistines, *ver. 1*. (2.) Over the Moabites, *ver. 2*. (3.) Over the king of Zobah, *ver. 3, 4*. (4.) Over the Syrians, *ver. 5—8—13*. (5.) Over the Edomites, *ver. 14*. 2. Of the presents that were brought him, and the wealth he got from the nations he subdued, which he dedicated to God, *ver. 9—12*. 3. Of his court, the administration of his government, *ver. 15*. and his chief officers, *ver. 16—18*. This gives us a general idea of the prosperity of David's reign.

1. **A**N D after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them: and David took Metheg-ammah out of the hand of the Philistines. 2. And he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground: even with two lines measured he, to put to death; and with one full line to

keep alive: and so the Moabites became David's servants, and brought gifts. 3. David smote also Hadadezer the son of Rehob, king of Zobah, as he went to recover his border at the river Euphrates. 4. And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven hundred horse-men, and twenty thousand foot-men: and David houghed all the chariot-horses, but reserved of them for an hundred chariots. 5. And when the Syrians of Damascus came to succour Hadadezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men. 6. Then David put garrisons in Syria of Damascus: and the Syrians became servants to David and brought gifts: and the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went. 7. And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. 8. And from Bethai, and from Berothai, cities of Hadadezer, king David took exceeding much brass.

God had given David rest from all his enemies that opposed him and made head against him, and he having made a good use of that rest, has now commission given him to make war upon them, and to act offensively for the revenging of Israel's quarrels and the recovery of their rights: For as yet they were not in full possession of that country, which by the promise of God they were entitled to.

1. He quite subdued the Philistines, *ver. 1*. They had attacked him when they thought him weak, *chap. v. 17*. and went by the worst then; but when he found himself strong he attacked them, and made himself master of their country. They had long been vexatious and oppressive to Israel, Saul got no ground against them, but David completed Israel's deliverance out of their hands, which Samson had begun long before, *Judg. xiii. 5*. Metheg-ammah was Gath, (the chief and royal city of the Philistines) and the towns belonging to it, among which there was a constant garrison kept by the Philistines on the hill Ammah, (*2 Sam. ii. 29*.) which was Metheg, a bridle (so it signifies) or curb upon the people of Israel; this David took out of their hand, and used it as a curb upon them. Thus when the strong man is disarmed the armour wherein he trusted is taken from him, and used against him, *Luke xi. 22*. And after the long and frequent struggles, which the saints have had with the powers of darkness, like Israel with the Philistines, the son of David shall tread them all under their feet and make them more than conquerors.

2. He smote the Moabites, and made them tributaries to Israel, *ver. 2*. He divided the country into three parts; two of which he destroyed, casting down the strongholds, and putting all to the sword: the third part he spared to till the ground, and be servants to Israel. Dr. Lightfoot saith, he laid them on the ground, and measured them with a cord, who should be slain, and who should live: and this is called, *meeting out the valley of Succoth*, *Psal. lx. 6*. The Jews say, he used this severity with the Moabites, because they had slain his parents, and brethren, whom he put under the protection of the king of Moab during his exile, *1 Sam. xxii. 3, 4*. He did it in justice, because they had been, and in policy, because, if left in their strength, they still would have been dangerous enemies to the Israel of God. But observe, though it was necessary two thirds should be cut off, yet the line that was to keep alive, though it was but one, is ordered to be a full line: Be sure give that length enough: let the line of mercy be stretched to the utmost in favour of life, acts of indemnity must be construed so as to enlarge the favour. Now Balaam's prophecy was fulfilled, *a sceptre shall arise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab*, to the utmost of which the fatal line extended, *Numb. xxiv. 17*. The Moabites continued tributaries to Israel till after the death of Ahab, *2 Kings iii. 1, 5*. then they rebelled and were never reduced.

3. He smote the Syrians, or Amorites: of them there were two distinct kingdoms, as we find them spoken of in the title of the sixteenth Psalm, *Aram Naharaim, Syria of the rivers*, whose head city was Damascus, (named for its rivers, *2 Kings v. 12*.) and Aram Zobah which joined to it, but extended to Euphrates. These were the two northern crowns. 1. David began with the Syrians of Zobah, *ver. 3, 4*. As he went to settle his border at the river Euphrates (for so far the land conveyed by the divine grant to Abraham and his seed did extend, *Gen. xv. 18*.) the king of Zobah opposed him, being himself possessed of those countries which belonged to Israel; but David routed his forces, took his chariots and horsemen. The horsemen are here said to be seven hundred, but *1 Chron. xviii. 1*. seven thousand. If they divided their horse by ten in a company, as it is probable they did, the captains and companies were seven hundred, but the horsemen were seven thousand. David houghed the horses, cut the sinews of their hams, and so lamed them, and made them unserviceable, at least in war, God having forbidden them to multiply horses, *Deut. xvii. 16*. David reserved only one hundred chariots out of one thousand for his own use, for he placed his strength not in chariots or horses, but in the living God, *Psal. xx. 7*. and wrote it from his own observation, that a horse is a vain thing for safety, *Psal. xxxiii. 16, 17*. 2. The Syrians of Damascus coming in to the relief of the king of Zobah, fell with him. Twenty-two thousand were slain in the field, *ver. 5*. So that it was easy for David to make himself master of the country, and garrison it for himself, *ver. 6*. The enemies of God's church, that think to secure themselves, will prove in the end to ruin themselves, by their confederacies with each other. Associate yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces, *Isa. viii. 9*.

In all those wars, 1. David was protected. The Lord preserved him whithersoever he went. It seems he went in person, and in the cause of God and Israel, jeopardied his own life in the high places of the field, but God covered his head in the day of battle, which he oft speaks of in his Psalms to the glory of God. 2. He was enriched. He took the shields of gold which the servants of Hadadezer had in their custody, *ver. 7*. and much brass from several cities of Syria, *ver. 8*. which he was intitled to not only *jure belli*, by the unconscionable right of the longest sword, Get it, and take it? but by commission from heaven, and the ancient entail of these countries on the seed of Abraham.

9. ¶ When Toi king of Hamath heard that David had smitten all the host of Hadadezer, 10. Then Toi sent Joram his son unto king David to salute him, and to bless him, because he had fought against Hadadezer, and smitten him (for Hadadezer had wars with Toi) and Joram brought with him vessels of silver, and vessels of gold and vessels of brass; 11. Which also

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4. His success against the Edomites; they all became David's servants, ver. 14. Now, and not till now, Isaac's blessing was accomplished, by which Jacob was made Esau's Lord, Gen. xxvii. 37—40. and the Edomites continued long tributaries to the kings of Judah, as the Moabites were to the kings of Israel, till in Joram's time they revolted, 2 Chron. xxi. 8. As Isaac had there foretold, that Esau should in process of time break the yoke from off his neck. Thus David by his conquests, (1.) Secured peace to his son, that he might have time to build the temple. And (2.) procured wealth for his son, that he might have wherewith to build it. God employs his servants variously; some in one employment, others in another; some in the spiritual battles, others in the spiritual buildings; and one prepares work for the other, that God may have the glory of all. All David's victories were typical of the success of the gospel against the kingdom of Satan, in which the son of David rode forth, conquering and to conquer, and shall reign till he has brought down all opposing rule, principality and power; and he has as David had, ver. 2. a line to kill, and a line to save; for the same gospel is to some a favour of life unto life, to others a favour of death unto death.

15. And David reigned over all Israel, and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people. 16. And Joab the son of Zeruiah was over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was recorder; 17. And Zadok the son of Abiathar, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, were the priests, and Seraiah was the scribe; 18. And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over both the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were chief rulers.

David was not so engaged, in his wars abroad, as to neglect the administration of the government at home. 1. His care extended itself to all the parts of his dominion. *He reigned over all Israel*, ver. 15. not only he had right to reign over all the tribes, but he did so; they were all safe under his protection, and shared in the fruits of his good government. 2. He did justice with an unbiassed unshaken hand; *he executed judgment unto all his people*; neither did wrong, or denied or delayed right to any. It speaks, (1.) His industry and close application to business; his easiness of access, and readiness to admit all addresses and appeals made to him: All his people even the meanest, and those of the most distant tribes, were welcome to his council-board. (2.) His impartiality, and the equity of his proceeding in administering justice; he never perverted justice for favour or affection, nor had respect to persons in judgment. Herein he was a type of Christ, who was faithful and true, and who doth in *righteousness both judge and make war*, Rev. xix. 11. See Psalm lxxii. 1, 2.

3. He kept good order, and good officers in his court. David being the first king that had an established government (for Saul's reign was short and unsettled) he had the forming of the model of the administration: in Saul's time we read of no other great officer but Abner, that was captain of the host; but David instituted more officers. Here is, 1. Two military officers: Joab that was general of the forces in the field, and Benaiah that was over the Cherethites and Pelethites, who were either the city trainbands, archers and slingers, so the Chaldee, or rather the life-guards, or standing force, that attended the king's person; the pretorian band; the militia: They were ready to do service at home, to assist in the administration

ing of justice, and to preserving the public peace; we find them employed in proclaiming Solomon, 1 Kings i. 38. (2.) Two ecclesiastical officers; Zadok and Ahimelech were priests, *i. e.* they were most employed in the priests work under Abiathar, the high-priest. (3.) Two civil officers, one that was recorder, or remembrancer, to put the king in mind of business in its season; he was prime minister of state, yet not intrusted with the custody of the king's conscience, as they say of our Lord Chancellor, but only of the king's memory; let the king be put in mind of business, and he would do it himself. Another that was scribe or secretary of state, that drew up public orders and dispatches, and recorded judgments given. Lastly, David's sons as they grew to be fit for business were made chief rulers; they had places of honour and trust assigned them, either in the household, or in the camp, or in the courts of justice, according as their genius led them: They were chief about the king; so it is explained, 1 Chron. xviii. 17. employed near them, that they might be under his eye. Our Lord Jesus has appointed officers in his kingdom, for his honour and the good of the community; when he ascended on high, *he gave these gifts*, Eph. iv. 11. *to every man his work*, Mark xiii. 34. David made his sons chief rulers, but all believers, Christ's spiritual seed, are better preferred, for they are made to our God kings and priests, Rev. i. 6.

C H A P. IX.

The only thing recorded in this chapter, is the kindness David shewed to Jonathan's seed for his sake. (1.) The kind enquiry he made after the remains of the house of Saul, and his discovery of Mephibosheth, ver. 1—4. (2.) The kind reception he gave to Mephibosheth, when he was brought to him, ver. 5—8. (3.) The kind provision he made for him and his, ver. 9—13.

1. AND David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake? 2. And there was of the house of Saul a servant whose name was Ziba: and when they had called him unto David, the king said unto him, Art thou Ziba? And he said, Thy servant is he. 3. And the king said, Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God unto him? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son which is lame on his feet. 4. And the king said unto him, Where is he? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he is in the house of Michar, the son of Ammiel, in Lo-debar. 5. ¶ Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar. 6. Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant. 7. And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness, for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father, and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. 8. And he bowed himself, and said, What is thy servant, that thou shouldest look upon such a dead dog as I am?

Here is, 1. David's enquiry after the remains of the ruined house of Saul, ver. 1. This was a great while after his accession to the throne, for it should seem that Mephibosheth, who was but five years old when Saul died, had now a son born, ver. 12. David had too long forgot his obligations to Jonathan, but now at length they are brought to his mind. It is good sometimes to bethink ourselves, whether there be any promises or engagements that we have neglected to make good; better do it late than never. The breviate which Paul gives us of the life of David is this, Acts xiii. 36. *he reared his generation according to the will of God*, *i. e.* he was a man that made it his business to do good: witness this instance, where we may observe,

1. That he sought an opportunity to do good. He might perhaps have satisfied his conscience with the performance of his promise to Jonathan, if he had been only ready, upon request or application made to him by any of his seed, to help and succour them. But he doth more, he enquires of those about him first, ver. 1. and when he light of a person, that was likely to inform him, asked him particularly, *Is there any left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness?* ver. 3. *Is there yet any*, not only to whom I may shew justice, Numb. v. 8. but to whom I may shew kindness? Note, Good men should seek opportunities of doing good. The liberal desireth liberal things, 1Sa. xxii. 8. For many times, the most proper objects of our kindness and charity are such as will not be light on without enquiry. The most necessitous are the least clamorous.

2. Those he enquired after were the remains of the house of Saul, to whom he would shew kindness for Jonathan's sake; *Is there any left of the house of Saul?* Saul had had a very numerous family, 1 Chron. viii. 33. enough to replenish a country and yet so emptied, that none of it appeared; but it was come to this enquiry, *Is there any left?* See how the providence of God can empty full families; see how the sin of man will do it? Saul's was a bloody house, no marvel it was thus reduced, chap. xxi. 1. But though God visited the iniquity of the father upon the children, David would not. Is there any left that I can shew kindness to, not for Saul's own sake, but for Jonathan's?

(1.) Saul was David's sworn enemy, and yet he would shew kindness to his house with all his heart, and was forward to do it. He doth not say, *is there any left of the house of Saul, that I may find some way to take them off, and prevent their giving disturbance to me or my successor.* It was against Ahimelech's mind, that any one was left of the house of Gideon, Judg. ix. 5. and against Athaliah's mind, that any one was left of the seed royal, 2 Chron. xxii. 10, 11. those were usurped governments. David's needed no such vile support: he was desirous to shew kindness to the house of Saul, not only because he trusted in God, and feared not what they could do unto him, but because he was of a charitable disposition, and forgave what they had done to him. Note, We must evidence the sincerity of our forgiving those that have been any way unjust or injurious to us, by being ready, as we have opportunity, to shew kindness both to them and theirs. We must not only not avenge ourselves upon them, but we must love them,

and do them good, Mat. v. 44. and not be backward to do any office of love and good-will, to those that have done us many an ill turn, 1 Pet. iii. 9—*but contrariwise blessing.* This is the way to overcome evil, and to find mercy for ourselves and ours when we or they need it.

(2.) Jonathan was David's sworn friend, and therefore he would shew kindness to his house. This teaches us, 1. To be mindful of our covenant. The kindness we have promised, we must conscientiously perform, though it should not be claimed. God is faithful to us, let us not be unfaithful to one another. 2. To be mindful of our friendships, our old friendships. Note, Kindness to our friends, even to them and theirs, is one of the laws of our holy religion. *He that has friends, may shew himself friendly,* Prov. xviii. 24. If providence has raised us, and our friends and their families are brought low, yet we must not forget former acquaintance, but rather look upon that as giving us so much the fairer opportunity of being kind to them; then our friends have most need of us, and we are in the best capacity to help them. Though there be not a solid league of friendship tying us to this constancy of love, yet there is a sacred law of friendship no less obliging, that to him that is in misery pity should be shewed by his friend; *Job vi. 14. A brother is born for adversity.* Friendship obliges us to take cognizance of the families and surviving relations of those who have loved, who when they left us, left behind them their bodies, their names and their posterity to be kind to.

3. The kindness he promised to shew them, he calls the *kindness of God*; not only great kindness, but, 1. Kindness in pursuance of the covenant that was between him and Jonathan, to which God was a witness. See 1 Sam. xx. 42. 2. Kindness after God's example, for we must be merciful as he is. He spares those whom he has advantage against, and so must we. Jonathan's request to David was, 1 Sam. xx. 14. *Shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not,* and the same to my seed. The kindness of God is some greater instance of kindness than one can ordinarily expect from men. 3. It is kindness done after a godly sort, and with an eye to God, and his honour and favour.

2. Information given him concerning Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan. Ziba was an old retainer to Saul's family, and knew the state of it; he is sent for, and examined, and acquaints the king that Jonathan's son was living, but lame, ver. 3. how he came to be so, we read before, chap. iv. 4. and that he lived obscure, probably, among his mother's relations in Lo-debar, in Gilead, on the other side Jordan, where he was forgotten as a dead man out of mind, but bore it the easier, because he could remember little of the honour he fell from.

3. The bringing of him to court. The king sent (Ziba, it is likely) to bring him up to Jerusalem with all convenient speed, ver. 5. Thus he eased Machir of his trouble, and, perhaps, considered him for what he had laid out on Mephibosheth's account. This Machir appears to have been a very generous free-hearted man, to have entertained Mephibosheth, not out of any disaffection to David, or his government, but in compassion to a young gentleman reduced; for afterwards we find him kind to David himself when he fled from Absalom; he is named, 2 Sam. xvii. 27. among those that furnished the king with what he wanted at Mahanaim; though, when David sent for Mephibosheth from him, he little thought that the time would come, when he himself would gladly be beholden to him: and perhaps Machir was then the more ready to help David, in recompence for his kindness to Mephibosheth; therefore he should be forward to give, because we know not but we ourselves may some time be in want, *Ecc. xi. 2. But he that watereth, shall be watered himself.*

Now, 1. Mephibosheth presents himself to David with all the respect that was owing to his character. Lame as he was, *he fell on his face and did reverence,* ver. 6. David had thus made his honours to Mephibosheth's father. Jonathan when he was next to the throne, 1 Sam. xx. 41. *he bowed himself to him three times,* and now Mephibosheth, in like manner, addresseth him, when the tables are turned. Those that when they are inferior relations shew respect, when they come to be advanced shall have respect shewed them.

2. David received him with all the kindness that could be. 1. He spoke to him as one surprized, but pleased to see him. Mephibosheth! Why, is there such a man alive? He remembered his name, for, it is probable, he was born about the time of the intimacy between him and Jonathan. 2. He bid him not be afraid. *Fear not,* ver. 7. It is probable, the sight of David put him into some confusion; to free him from which, he assures him, he sent for him, not out of any jealousy he had of him, or any ill design upon him, but to shew him kindness. Great men should not take a pleasure in the timorous approaches of their inferiors, for the great God doth not, but should encourage them. 3. He gives him, by grant from the crown, *all the land of Saul his father,* i. e. his paternal estate, which was forfeited by Mephibosheth's rebellion, and added to his own revenue. This was a real favour, the more than giving him a kind word. True friendship will be generous. 4. Though he had thus given him a good estate sufficient to maintain him, yet, for Jonathan's sake, (whom perhaps he saw some resemblance of in Mephibosheth's face) he will take him to be a constant guest at his own table, where he will not only be comfortably fed, but have company and attendance suitable to his birth and quality. Though Mephibosheth was lame and unsightly, and doth not appear to have any great fitness for business, yet for his good father's sake David will take him to be one of his family.

3. Mephibosheth accepts this kindness with great humility and self-abasement. He was none of those that take every favour as a debt, and think every thing too little that their friends do for them; but on the contrary, speaks as one amazed at the grants David made him, ver. 8. *What is thy servant, that thou shouldst look upon such a dead dog as I am?* How doth he vilify himself! Though the son of a prince, and the grandson of a king, yet his family being under guilt and wrath, and himself poor and lame, he calls himself a dead dog before David. Note, It is good to have the heart humble under humbling providences: if when divine providence brings our condition down, divine grace brings our spirits down with it, we shall be easy. And those who thus humble themselves shall be exalted. How doth he magnify David's kindness! It had been easy to lessen it, if he had been so disposed: Had he restored him his father's estate, it was but giving him his own. Did he take him to his table, that was policy; that he might have an eye upon him. But Mephibosheth thinks all wonderful kind that David said and did, and himself less than the least of his favours. See 1 Sam. xviii. 18.

9. ¶ Then the king called to Ziba, Saul's servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master's son all that pertained to Saul, and to all his house. 10. Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master's son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth, thy master's son, shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty ser-

vants. 11. Then said Ziba unto the king, According to all that my lord the king hath commanded his servant, so shall thy servant do. As for Mephibosheth, *said the king,* he shall eat at my table, as one of the king's sons. 12. And Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Micha: and all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth. 13. So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king's table; and was lame on both his feet.

The matter is here settled concerning Mephibosheth.

1. This grant of his father's estate is confirmed to him, and Ziba called to be a witness to it, ver. 9. and, it should seem, Saul had a very good estate, for his father was a mighty man of substance, 1 Sam. ix. 1. and he had fields and vineyards to bestow, 1 Sam. xxii. 7. Be it never so much, Mephibosheth is now master of it all.

2. The management of the estate is committed to Ziba, who knew what it was, and how to make the most of it, whom having been his father's servant he might confide in, and who, having a numerous family of sons and servants, had hands sufficient to be employed about it, ver. 10. Thus Mephibosheth is made very easy, having a good estate without care, and is in a fair way of being very rich; having much coming in, and little occasion to spend, himself being kept at David's table. Yet he must have food to eat besides his own bread, provision for his son and servants, and Ziba's son and servants would come in for their share of his revenue; for which reason, perhaps, their number is here mentioned, *fifteen sons, and twenty servants,* who would go near to make even with it; for as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them, and what good has the owner thereof, save the beholding of them with his eyes, *Ecc. v. 11. All that dwell in the house of Ziba, were servants to Mephibosheth,* ver. 12. i. e. they all lived upon, and make a prey of his estate, under pretence of waiting on him and doing him service. The Jews have a saying, He that multiplies servants, multiplies thieves. Ziba is now pleased, for he loves wealth, and will have enough to turn him in, as the king has commanded, *so shall thy servant do,* ver. 11. let me alone with the estate: and as for Mephibosheth (they seem to be Ziba's words) if the king please, he need not trouble the court, *he shall eat at my table,* and be as well treated as one of the king's sons. But David will have him at his own table, and Mephibosheth is as well pleased with his post, as Ziba with his: how unfaithful Ziba was to him we shall find afterwards, chap. xvi. 3.

Now because David was a type of Christ, his Lord and son, his root and offspring, let his kindness to Mephibosheth serve to illustrate the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards fallen man, which yet he was under no obligation to, as David was to Jonathan. Man was convicted of rebellion against God, and, like Saul's house, under a sentence of rejection from him, was not only brought low and impoverished, but lame and impotent, made so by the fall: the Son of God enquires after this degenerate race, that enquired not after him; comes to seek and save them. Those of them that humble themselves before him, and commit themselves to him, he restores them the forfeited inheritance, entitles them to a better paradise than that which Adam lost, and takes them into communion with himself, sets them with his children at his table, and feasts them with the dainties of heaven. *Lord what is man, that thou shouldst thus magnify him!*

C H A P. X.

This chapter gives us an account of a war David had with the Ammonites and the Syrians their allies, with the occasion and success of it. 1. David sends a friendly embassy to Hanun king of the Ammonites, ver. 1, 2. 2. He, upon a base surmise, that it was ill intended, abused David's ambassadors, ver. 3, 4. 3. David's resenting it, ver. 5. the Ammonites prepared for war against him, ver. 6. 4. David carries the war into their own country, sends Joab and Abishai against them, who address themselves to the battle with a great deal of conduct and bravery, ver. 7—12. 5. The Ammonites, and the Syrians their allies, were totally routed, ver. 13, 14. 6. The forces of the Syrians, which rallied again, were a second time defeated, ver. 15—19. Thus did David advance his own reputation for gratitude, in returning kindness, and justice, in repairing his injuries.

1. **A**ND it came to pass after this, that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son reigned in his stead. 2. Then said David, I will shew kindness unto Hanun, the son of Nahash, as his father shewed kindness unto me. And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants, for his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon. 3. And the princes of the children of Ammon said unto Hanun their lord, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? Hath not David rather sent his servants unto thee, to search the city, and to spy it out, and to overthrow it? 4. Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away. 5. When they told it unto David he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed: and the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and then return.

Here is, 1. The great respect David paid to his neighbour, the king of the Ammonites, ver. 1, 2. 1. The inducement to it, was some kindnesses he had formerly received from Nahash the deceased king. He shewed kindness to me, saith David, ver. 2. and therefore (having lately had satisfaction in shewing kindness to Mephibosheth, for his father's sake) he resolves to shew kindness to his son, and to keep up a friendly correspondence with him. Thus the pleasure of doing one kind and generous action, should excite us to another. Nahash had been an enemy to Israel, a cruel enemy, 1 Sam. xi. 2. and yet had shewed kindness to David, perhaps only in contradiction to Saul, who was unkind to him: however, if David receive kindness,

kindness, he is not nice in examining the grounds and principles of it, but resolves gratefully to return it. If a Pharisee give alms in pride, though God will not reward it, yet he that receives alms ought to return thanks for it: God knows the heart, but we do not. 2. The particular instance of respect, was sending an embassy to condole his father's death, as is common among princes in alliance with each other. *David sent to comfort him.* Note, It is a comfort to children when their parents are dead, to find that their parents' friends are theirs, and that they intend to keep up that acquaintance with them. It is a comfort to mourners, to find that there are those who mourn with them, are sensible of their loss, and share with them in it. It is a comfort to those who are honouring the memory of their deceased relations, to find there are others who likewise honour it, and had a value for those we valued.

2. The great affront which Hanun the king of the Ammonites put upon David in his ambassadors. 1. He hearkened to the spiteful suggestions of his princes, who insinuated that David's ambassadors, under pretence of being comforters, were sent as spies, *ver. 3.* false men are ready to think others as false as themselves; and they that bear ill-will to their neighbours, are resolved not to believe that their neighbours bear any good will to them. They would not thus have imagined that David dissembled, but that they were conscious to themselves that they could have dissembled to serve a turn. An ill suspicion argues an ill mind. Bishop Patrick's note on this is, that there is nothing so well meant, but it may be ill interpreted, and is wont to be so by men who love no body but themselves. Men of the greatest honour and virtue must not think it strange if they be thus misrepresented. *Charity thinketh no evil.* 2. Entertaining this vile suggestion, he basely abused David's ambassadors, like a man of a sordid villainous spirit, that was fitter to rake a kennel than to wear a crown. If he had any reason to suspect that David's messengers came on an ill design, he had done prudently enough to be upon the reserve with them, and to dismiss them as soon as he could; but it is plain he only sought an occasion to put the utmost disgrace he could upon them, out of an antipathy to their king and country. They were themselves men of honour, and much more so, as they represented the prince that sent them; they and their reputation were under the special protection of the law of nations; they put a confidence in the Ammonites, and came among them unarmed; yet Hanun used them like rogues and vagabonds, and worse; *shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the midst,* to expose them to the contempt and ridicule of his servants, that they might make sport with them, and they might seem vile.

3. David's tender concern for his servants that were thus abused. He sent to meet them, and to let them know how much he interested himself in their quarrel, and how soon he would revenge it, and directed them to stay at Jericho, a private place, where they would not have occasion to come into company, till that half of their beards, which was shaved off, was grown to such a length that the other half might be decently cut to it, *ver. 5.* The Jews wore their beards long, reckoning it an honour to appear aged and grave; and therefore it was not fit that persons of their rank and figure should appear at court unlike their neighbours. Change of raiment, it is likely they had with them, to put on, instead of those which were cut off; but the loss of their beards would not be soon repaired; yet, in time, those would grow again, and all would be well. Let us learn not to lay too much to heart unjust reproaches; after a while they will wear off of themselves, and turn only to the shame of their authors, while the injured reputation in a little time grows again, as these beards did. God will bring forth thy righteousness as the light, therefore wait patiently for him, *Psalm xxxvii. 6, 7.*

Some have thought that David, in this indignity he received from the king of Ammon, was but well enough served for courting and complimenting that pagan prince, whom he knew to be an inveterate enemy to Israel, and might now remember how, when he would have put out the right eyes of the men of Jabesh-gilead, he designed that, as he did this, for a reproach upon all Israel, *1 Sam. xi. 2.* What better usage could he expect from such a spiteful family and people? Why should he covet the friendship of a people, which Israel must have so little to do with, as that an Ammonite might not enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to the tenth generation, *Deut. xxiii. 3.*

6. ¶ And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Bethrehob, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ish-tob twelve thousand men. 7. And when David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men. 8. And the children of Ammon came out, and put the battle in array at the entering in of the gate: and the Syrians of Zoba, and of Rehob, and Ish-tob, and Maacah were by themselves in the field. 9. When Joab saw that the front of the battle was against him before and behind, he chose of all the choice men of Israel, and put them in array against the Syrians. 10. And the rest of the people he delivered into the hands of Abishai his brother, that he might put them in array against the children of Ammon. 11. And he said, if the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will come and help thee. 12. Be of good courage, and let us play the men for our people, and for the cities of our God: and the LORD do that which seemeth him good. 13. And Joab drew nigh, and the people that were with him, unto the battle against the Syrians: and they fled before him. 14. And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, then fled they also before Abishai, and entered into the city: so Joab returned from the children of Ammon, and came to Jerusalem.

Here is, 1. The preparation which the Ammonites make for war, *ver. 6.* They saw they had made themselves very odious to David, and obnoxious to his just displeasure: this they might easily foresee, when they abused his ambassadors, which was no other than a challenge to war, and a bold defiance of him. Yet, it seems, they had not considered how unable they were, with their thousands, to meet his, for now they found themselves an

unequal match, and were forced to hire forces of other nations into their service. Thus sinners daringly provoke God, and expose themselves to his wrath, and never consider that he is *stronger than they*, *1 Cor. x. 32.* The Ammonites gave the affront first, and they were the first that raised forces to justify it. Had they humbled themselves, and begged David's pardon, probably, an honorary satisfaction might have atoned for the offence. But when they were thus desperately resolved to stand by what they had done, they courted their own ruin.

2. The speedy descent which David's forces made upon them, *ver. 7.* When David heard of their military preparations, he sent Joab with a great army to attack them, *ver. 7.* They that are in war with the Son of David, not only give the provocation, but begin the war, for he waits to be gracious, but they strengthen themselves against him, and therefore, if they turn not he will whet his sword; *Psalm vii. 12.* God has forces to send against those that set his wrath at defiance, *Iju. v. 19.* which will convince them, when it is too late, that *none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered.* It was David's prudence to carry the war into their own country, and fight them at the entering in of the gate of their capital city, Rabbah, as some think, or Medaba, a city in their borders, before which they pitched to guard their coast, *1 Chron. xix. 7.* Such are the terrors and desolations of war, that every good prince will, in love to his people, keep it as much as may be a distance from them.

3. Preparations made on both sides for an engagement. 1. The enemy disposed themselves into two bodies, one of Ammonites, which, being their own, were posted at the gate of the city; the other of Syrians, whom they had taken into their pay, and who were therefore posted at a distance in the field, to charge the forces of Israel in the flank or rear, while the Ammonites charged them in the front, *ver. 8.* 2. Joab, like a wise general, was soon aware of the design, and accordingly divided his forces: the choicest men he took under his own command to fight the Syrians, whom, probably, he knew to be the better soldiers, and, being hired men, better versed in the arts of war, *ver. 9.* The rest of the force he put under the command of Abishai his brother, to engage the Ammonites, *ver. 10.* It should seem, Joab found the enemy so well prepared to receive them, that his conduct and courage were never tried as now.

4. Joab's speech before the battle, *ver. 11, 12.* It is not long, but pertinent and brave. 1. He prudently consults the matter with Abishai his brother, that the dividing of the forces might not be the weakening of them; but that which part forever was borne hard upon, the other should come in to its assistance. He supposeth the worst, that one of them should be obliged to give back; and in that case, upon a signal given, the other should send a detachment to relieve that. Note, Mutual helpfulness is brotherly duty. If occasion be, *thou shalt help me, and I will help thee.* Christ's soldiers should thus strengthen one another's hands in their spiritual warfare. The strong must succour and help the weak. They that through grace are conquerors over temptations must counsel and comfort, and pray for those that are tempted; *When thou art converted strengthen thy brethren,* *Luke xxii. 32.* The members of the natural body help one another, *1 Cor. xii. 21.* 2. He bravely encourageth himself and his brother, and the rest of the officers and soldiers, to do their utmost. Great dangers put an edge upon true courage. When Joab saw the front of the battle was against him, both before and behind, instead of giving orders to make an honourable retreat, he animates his men to charge so much the more furiously: *Be of good courage, and let us play the men;* not for pay and preferment, for honour and fame, but for our people, and for the cities of our God; for the public safety and welfare, in which the glory of God is so much interested; God and our country was the word. Let us be valiant, from a principle of love to Israel, that are our people, descended from the same stock, for whom we are employed, and in whose peace we shall have peace: and from a principle of love to God, for they are his cities that we are fighting in the defence of. The relation which any person or thing stands in to God, should endear it to us, and engage us to do our utmost in its service. 3. He piously leaves the issue with God: when we have done our part according to the duty of our place, let the Lord do that which seemeth him good. Let nothing be wanting in us, whatever the success be; let God's work be done by us, and then God's will be done concerning us. When we make conscience of doing our duty, we may with the greatest satisfaction leave the event with God; not thinking that our valour binds him to prosper us, but that still he may do as he pleaseth, yet hoping for his salvation in his own way and time.

5. The victory Joab obtained over the confederate forces of Syria and Ammon, *ver. 13, 14.* He provided for the worst, and put the case that the Syrians or Ammonites might prove too strong for him, *ver. 11.* but he proved too strong for them both. We are never the further from success, by our preparing for disappointment. The Syrians were first routed by Joab, and then the Ammonites by Abishai, who seem not to have fought at all, but upon the retreat of the Syrians, they fled into the city. It is a temptation to soldiers to fly, when they have a city at their backs to fly to. It is one thing when men may either fight or fly, and another thing when they must either fight or die.

15. And when the Syrians saw that they were smitten before Israel, they gathered themselves together. 16. And Hadarezer sent, and brought out the Syrians that were beyond the river: and they came to Helam; and Shobach the captain of the host of Hadarezer went before them. 17. And when it was told David, he gathered all Israel together, and passed over Jordan, and came to Helam: and the Syrians set themselves in array against David, and fought with him. 18. And the Syrians fled before Israel, and David slew the men of seven hundred chariots of the Syrians, and forty thousand horsemen, and smote Shobach the captain of their host, who died there. 19. And when all the kings that were servants to Hadarezer saw that they were smitten before Israel, they made peace with Israel, and served them. So the Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon any more.

Here is, 1. A new attempt of the Syrians to recover their lost honour, and to check the progress of David's victorious arms. The forces that were lately dispersed, rallied again, and gathered themselves together, *ver. 15.* even the baffled cause will make head as long as there is any life in it; the enemies of the Son of David do so, *Matt. xxii. 34. Rev. xix. 19.* These being conscious of their insufficiency, called in the aid of their allies and dependencies on the other side the river, *ver. 16.* and being thus recruited they hoped to make their part good with Israel, but they knew not the thought

of the Lord, for he gathered them as sheaves into the floor, see Micah iv. 11, 12, 13. 2. The defeat of this attempt by the vigilance and valour of David, who, upon notice of their design, resolved not to stay till they attacked him, but went in person at the head of his army over Jordan, ver. 17. and in a pitched battle routed the Syrians, ver. 18. slew seven thousand men, who belonged to seven hundred chariots, and forty thousand other soldiers, horse and foot, as appears by comparing 1 Chron. xix. 18. Their general was killed in the battle, and David came home in triumph no doubt.

3. The consequence of this victory over the Syrians. 1. David gained several tributaries, ver. 19. The kings, or petty princes, that had been subject to Hadarezer, when they saw how powerful David was, very wisely made peace with Israel, whom they found they could not make war with, and served them, who were able to give them protection. Thus the promise made to Abraham, Gen. xv. 18. and repeated to Joshua, chap. i. 4. that the borders of Israel should extend to the river Euphrates, was performed at length. 2. The Ammonites lost their old allies. The Syrians feared to help the children of Ammon, not because they had an unrighteous cause, justifying a crime which was a breach of the law of nations, but because they found it was an unsuccessful cause. It is dangerous helping those that have God against them, for when they fall, their helpers will fall with them.

Jesus Christ the Son of David, sent his ambassadors, his apostles and ministers, after all his servants the prophets, to the Jewish church and nation: but they intreated them shamefully, as Hanun did David's ambassadors, mocked them, abused them, slew them: and this was it that filled the measure of their iniquity, and brought upon them ruin without remedy, Matt. xxi. 35—41. xxii. 7. compare 2 Chron. xxvi. 16. for Christ takes the affronts and injuries done to his ministers, as done to himself, and will avenge them accordingly.

C H A P. XI.

What David said of the mournful report of Saul's death, may more fitly be applied to the sad story of this chapter, the adultery and murder David was guilty of. Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon. We wish we could draw a veil over it, and that it might never be known, might never be said that David did such ill things as are here recorded of him; but it cannot, it must not be concealed: the scripture is faithful in relating the faults, even of those whom it most applauds, which is an instance of the sincerity of the penman, and an evidence that it was not written to serve any party: and even such stories as these were written for our learning, that he that thinks he stands may take heed lest he fall; and that others harms may be our warnings. Many, no doubt, have been emboldened to sin, and hardened in it, by this story, and to them it is a favour of death unto death; but many have by it been awakened to a holy jealousy over themselves, and constant watchfulness against sin, and to them it is a favour of life unto life. They are very great sins, and greatly aggravated, which here we find David guilty of. 1. He committed adultery with Bath-sheba, the wife of Uriah, ver. 1—5. 2. He contrived to father the spurious brood upon Uriah, ver. 6—13. 3. When that project failed, he plotted the death of Uriah by the sword of the children of Ammon, and effected it, ver. 14—25. 4. He married Bath-sheba, ver. 26, 27. Is this David! Is this the man after God's own heart! How is his behaviour changed, worse than it was before Ahimelech! How is the gold become dim? Let him that readeth, understand what the best of men are, when God leaves them to themselves.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, that after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah: but David tarried still at Jerusalem. 2. ¶ And it came to pass in an evening-tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: And from the roof he saw a woman washing herself, and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. 3. And David sent and enquired after the woman: and one said, Is not this Bath-sheba the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite? 4. And David sent messengers and took her, and she came in unto him, and he lay with her, (for she was purified from her uncleanness) and she returned unto her house, 5. And the woman conceived, and sent and told David, and said, I am with child.

Here is, 1. David's glory in pursuing the war against the Ammonites, ver. 1. We cannot take that pleasure in viewing this great action, which hitherto we have taken in observing David's achievements because the beauty of it was stained and sullied by sin; otherwise we might take notice of David's wisdom and bravery in following his blow. Having routed the army of the Ammonites in the field, as soon as ever the season of the year permitted, he sent more forces to waste the country, and further to avenge the quarrel of his ambassadors: Rabbah, their metropolis, gave them a stand, and held out a great while: that city Joab laid close siege to, and it was at the time of that siege that David fell into this sin.

2. David's shame in being himself conquered, and led captive by his own lust. The sin he was guilty of was adultery, against the letter of the seventh commandment, and (in the sense of the patriarchal age) a heinous crime, and an iniquity to be punished by the judges, Job xxxi. 11. a sin which takes away the heart, and gets a man a wound and dishonour more than any other, and the reproach of it is not wiped away.

1. Observe the occasions of this sin, which led to it.

(2.) Neglect of his business. When he should have been abroad with his army in the field, fighting the battles of the Lord, he devolved the care upon others, and he himself tarried still at Jerusalem, ver. 1. To the war with the Syrians David went in person, chap. x. 17. had he been now in his post at the head of his forces he had been out of the way of this temptation. When we are out of the way of our duty, we are in temptations.

(2.) Love of ease, and the indulgence of a slothful temper. He came off his bed at evening tide, ver. 2. there he had dozed away the afternoon in idleness, which he should have spent in some exercise, for his own improvement or the good of others. He used to pray, not only morning and evening,

but at noon in the day of his trouble; it is to be feared he had this noon omitted it. Idleness gives great advantage to the temper. Standing waters gather filth. The bed of sloth often proves the bed of lust.

(3.) A wandering eye. He saw a woman washing herself, probably from some ceremonial pollution, according to the law. The sin came in at the eye, as Eve's did. Perhaps, he sought to see her, at least, he did not practise according to his own prayer, Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity: and his son's caution in a like case, Look not thou on the wife when it is red. Either he had not, like Job, made a covenant with his eyes, or at this time he had forgot it.

2. The steps of the sin. When he saw her, lust immediately conceived, and, 1. He enquired who she was, ver. 2. perhaps, intending only, if she were unmarried, to take her to wife, as he had taken several; but if she were a wife, having no design upon her. 2. The corrupt desire growing more violent, though he was told she was a wife, and whose wife she was, yet he sent messengers for her, and then, it may be, intending only to please himself with her company and conversation. But, 3. When she came, he lay with her, she too easily consenting, because he was a great man, and famed for his goodness too; sure (thinks she) that can be no ill thing, which such a man as David is the mover of. See how the way of sin is down-hill, when men begin to do evil, they cannot soon stop themselves. The beginning of lust, as of strife, is like the letting forth of water: it is therefore wisdom to leave it off before it be meddled with. The foolish fly fires her wings, and fools her life away at last, by playing about the candle.

3. The aggravation of the sin. 1. He was now in years, fifty at least, some think more, when those lusts, which are more properly youthful, one would think, should not have been violent in him. 2. He had many wives and concubines of his own, this is insisted on, chap. xii. 8. 3. Uriah, whom he wronged, was one of his own worthies, a person of honour and virtue, and that was abroad in his service, jeopardizing his life in the high places of the field, for the honour and safety of him and his kingdom, where he himself should have been. 4. Bath-sheba, whom he debauched, was a lady of good reputation, and till she was drawn by him and his influence into this wickedness, no doubt had preserved her purity: little did she think, that ever she could have done so ill a thing, as to forsake the guide of her youth, and forget the covenant of her God; nor perhaps could any one in the world, but David, have prevailed against her. The adulterer not only wrongs and ruins his own soul, but as much as he can another's soul too. 5. David was a king, whom God had intrusted with the sword of justice, and the execution of the law upon other criminals, particularly upon adulterers, who were by the law to be put to death; for him therefore to be guilty of those crimes himself, was to make himself a pattern, when he should have been a terror to evil-doers. With what face could he rebuke or punish that in others, which he was conscious to himself of being guilty of? See Rom. ii. 22.

Much more might be said to aggravate the sin; and I can think but of one excuse for it, which is, that it was done but once, it was far from being his practice; it was by the surprise of a temptation that he was drawn into it. He was none of those, of whom the prophet complains, that they were as fed horses, neighing every one after his neighbour's wife, Jer. v. 8. but this once God left him to himself, as he did Hezekiah, that he might know what was in his heart, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. Had he been told of it before, he would have said, as Hazael, What! Is thy servant a dog? But by this instance we are taught, what need we have to pray every day; Further, in heaven, lead us not into temptation, and to watch, that we enter not into it.

6. ¶ And David sent to Joab, saying, Send me Uriah the Hittite. And Joab sent Uriah to David. 7. And when Uriah was come unto him, David demanded of him how Joab did, and how the people did, and how the war prospered. 8. And David said to Uriah, Go down to thy house, and wash thy feet. And Uriah departed out of the king's house, and there followed him a mess of meat from the king. 9. But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house, with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house. 10. And when they had told David, saying, Uriah went not down unto his house, David said unto Uriah, Camest thou not from thy journey? why then didst thou not go down unto thine house? 11. And Uriah said unto David, The ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in tents, and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? As thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing. 12. And David said to Uriah, tarry here to day also, and to-morrow I will let thee depart. So Uriah abode in Jerusalem, that day and the morrow, 13. And when David had called him, he did eat and drink before him, and he made him drunk: and at even he went out to lie on his bed with the servants of his lord, but went not down to his house.

Uriah, we may suppose, had now been absent from his wife some weeks, making the campaign in the country of the Ammonites, and not intending to return till the end of it; his wife being got with child in his absence, that (as is usual in this case) would bring to light the hidden works of darkness, and when Uriah, at his return, should find how he had been abused, and by whom, it might well be expected, 1. That he would prosecute his wife according to law, and have her stoned to death; for jealousy is the rage of a man, especially a man of honour; and he that is thus injured, will not spare in the day of vengeance, Prov. vi. 34. This Bath-sheba was apprehensive of, when she sent to let David know she was with child, intimating, that he was concerned to protect her, which, it is likely, if he had not promised her to do, (so wretchedly abusing his royal power) she would not have consented to him. Hopes of impunity is a great encouragement to iniquity. 2. It might also be expected, that since he could not prosecute David by law for an offence of this nature, he would take his revenge another way, and raise a rebellion against him. There have been instances of kings, that by provocations of this nature, given to some of their powerful subjects, have lost their crowns.

To prevent the double mischief, David contrives to father the child which should be born, upon Uriah himself, and therefore sends for him home, to stay a night or two with his wife. Observe.

1. How the plot was laid. Uriah must come home from the army, under pretence

pretence of bringing David an account how the war prospered, and how they went on with the siege of Rabbah, *ver. 7.* Thus doth he pretend a more than ordinary concern for his army, when that was, at present, the least thing in his thoughts; if he had not another turn to serve, an express of much less figure than Uriah might have sufficed to bring him a report of the state of the war. Having having had as much conference with Uriah as he thought requisite to cover the design, he sent him to his house, and, that he might be the more pleasant there with the wife of his youth, sent a dish of meat after him for their supper, *ver. 8.* When that project failed the first night, Uriah, being weary with his journey, and more desirous of sleep than meat, lay all night in the guard chamber, the next night *he made him drunk*, *ver. 13.* or made him merry, tempted him to drink more than was fit, that he might forget his vow, *ver. 11.* and might be disposed to go home to his own bed; to which, perhaps, if David could have made him dead drunk, he would have ordered him to be carried. It is a very wicked thing, upon any design whatsoever, to make a person drunk, *ver. 11.* that doth so, *Hab. ii. 15, 16.* God will put into their hand a cup of trembling, who put into the hands of others the cup of drunkenness. Robbing a man of his reason, is worse than robbing him of his money; and drawing him into sin, worse than drawing him into any trouble whatsoever. Every good man, especially every magistrate, should endeavour to prevent this sin, by admonishing, restraining, and denying the glass to those whom they see falling into excess; but to further it, it is to do the devil's work, and as factor for him.

2. How this plot was defeated by Uriah's firm resolution not to go lie in his own bed: both nights he slept with his life-guard, and *went not down to his house*, though it is probable, his wife pressed him to do it as much as David, *ver. 9—12.* Now, 1. Some think he suspected what was done, being informed of his wife's attendance at court, and therefore he would not go near her. But if he had any suspicion of that kind, sure he would have opened the letter that David sent by him to Joab. 2. Whether he suspected any thing or no, providence puts this resolution into his heart, and kept him to it for the discovering of David's sin, and that the baffling this design to conceal it, might awaken David's conscience to confess it, and repent of it. 3. The reason he gave to David for this strange instance of self-denial and mortification, was very brave, *ver. 11.* That while the army was encamped in the field, he would not lie at ease in his own house. The ark is in a tent, whether at home, in the tent David had pitched for it, or abroad with Joab in the camp, is not certain. Joab, and all the mighty men of Israel, lie hard and uneasy, and much exposed to the weather, and to the enemy, and shall I go take my ease and pleasure at my own house? No, he protests he will not do it. Now, 1. This was in itself a generous resolution, and shews Uriah to be a man of public spirit, bold and hardy, and mortified to the delights of sense. In times of public difficulty and danger, it doth not become us to repose ourselves in security, or roll ourselves in pleasure; or, with the king and Haman to sit down to drink, when the city *Shushan* was perplexed, *Esth. iii. ult.* We should voluntarily endure hardness, when the church of God is constrained to it. 2. It might have been of use to awaken David's conscience, and make his heart to smite him for what he had done. 1. That he had basely abused so brave a man as Uriah was, a man so heartily concerned for him and his kingdom, and that acted for him and it with so much vigour. 2. That he was himself so unlike him. The consideration of the public hardships and the hazards kept Uriah from lawful pleasures, yet could not keep David, though more nearly interested, from unlawful ones. Uriah's severity to himself, should have shamed David for his indulgence of himself. The law was *when the host goes forth against the enemy, then, in a special manner, keep thyself from every wicked thing*, *Deut. xxiii. 9.* Uriah outdid that law, but David violated it.

14. ¶ And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. 15. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die. 16. And it came to pass, when Joab observed the city, that he assigned Uriah unto a place where he knew that valiant men were. 17. And the men of the city went out, and fought with Joab: and there fell some of the people of the servants of David; and Uriah the Hittite died also. 18. ¶ Then Joab sent, and told David all the things concerning the war. 19. And charged the messenger, saying, When thou hast made an end of telling the matters of the war unto the king, 20. And if so be that the king's wrath arise, and he say unto thee, Wherefore approached ye so nigh unto the city when ye did fight? knew ye not that they would shoot from the wall? 21. Who smote Abimelech the son of Jerubbaeth? did not a woman cast a piece of a millstone upon him from the wall, that he died in Thebez? why went ye nigh the wall? Then say thou, Thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also. 22. ¶ So the messenger went, and came and shewed David all that Joab had sent him for. 23. And the messenger said unto David, Surely the men prevailed against us, and came out unto us in the field, and we were upon them even unto the entering of the gate. 24. And the shooters shot from off the wall upon thy servants, and some of the king's servants be dead, and thy servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also. 25. Then David said unto the messenger, Thus shalt thou say unto Joab, Let not this thing displease thee: for the sword devoureth one as well as another: make thy battle more strong against the city, and overthrow it: and encourage thou him. 26. ¶ And when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. 27. And when the mourning was past, David sent, and fetched her to his house, and she became his wife, and bare him a son: but the thing that David had done displeased the LORD.

When David's project of fathering the child upon Uriah himself failed, so that in process of time, Uriah would certainly know the wrong that had
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been done him; to prevent the fruits of his revenge, the devil puts it into David's heart to take him off, and then neither he nor Bath-sheba would be in any danger; what prosecution could there be, when there was no prosecutor? And suggesting further, that when he was out of the way, Bath-sheba might if he pleased be his own for ever. Adulteries having often occasioned murders, and one wickedness must be covered and secured with another. The beginnings of sin are therefore to be dreaded, for who knows where they will end?

It is resolved in David's breast (which one would think could never possibly have harboured so vile a thought) that Uriah must die; that innocent, valiant, gallant man, who was ready to die for his prince's honour, must die by his prince's hand. David has sinned, and Bath-sheba has sinned, and both against him, and therefore he must die, David determines he must. Is this the man whose heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt? *Quanto mutatus ab illo!* Is this he that executed judgment and justice to all his people? How can he now do so unjust a thing? See how fleshly lusts war against the soul, and what devastations they make in that war: how they blind the eyes, harden the heart, fear the conscience, and deprive men of all sense of honour and justice. *Whoso committeth adultery with a woman, longeth understanding, and quite loses it; he that doth it destroys his own soul*, *Prov. vi. 32.*

But as the eye of the adulterer, so the hand of the murderer seeketh concealment, *Job xxiv. 14, 15.* Works of darkness hate the light. When David bravely slew Goliath, it was done publicly and he gloried in it, but when he basely slew Uriah, it must be done clandestinely, for he is ashamed of it, and well he may. Who would do a thing that he dare not own? The devil having, as a poisonous serpent, put it into David's heart to murder Uriah, as a subtil serpent, he puts it into his head how to do it. Not as Absalom slew Amnon, by commanding his servants to assassinate him, or as Ahab slew Naboth by suborning witnesses to accuse him, but by exposing him to the enemy; a way of doing it, which perhaps would not seem so odious to conscience and the world, because soldiers expose themselves of course; if Uriah had not been in that dangerous post, another must; he has (as we say) a chance for his life; if he fight stoutly he may perhaps come off, and if he die it is in the bed of honour, where a soldier would choose to die; and yet all this will not save it from being a wilful murder, of malice prepense.

1. Orders are sent to Joab to set Uriah in the front of the hottest battle, and then to desert him, and abandon him to the enemy, *ver. 14, 15.* This was David's project to take off Uriah, and it succeeded, as he designed. Many were the aggravations of this murder. (1.) It was deliberate. He took time to consider of it; and though he had time to consider of it, for he wrote a letter about it, and though he had time to have countermanded the order afterwards, because it could be put into execution, yet he did not do it. (2.) He sent the letter by Uriah himself; than that which could be more base and barbarous, to make him accessory to his own death. And what a paradox was it, that he could bear such a malice against him, in whom yet he could repose such a confidence, as that he would carry letters, which he must not know the purport of. (3.) Advantage must be taken of Uriah's own courage and zeal for his king and country, which deserve the greatest praise and recompence, to betray him the easier to his fate. If he had not been forward to expose himself, perhaps he was a man of such a figure that Joab could not have exposed him; and that his noble fire should be designedly turned upon himself, was a most detestable instance of ingratitude. (4.) Many must be involved in the guilt; Joab the general, to whom the blood of his soldiers, especially the worthies, ought to be precious, must do it; he, and all that retire from Uriah, when they ought in conscience to support and second him, become guilty of his death. (5.) Uriah cannot thus die alone, the party he commands is in danger of being cut off with him; and it proved so, some of the people, even the servants of David (so they are called to aggravate David's sin, in being so prodigal of their lives) fell with him, *ver. 17.* Nay, this wilful ill-conduct by which Uriah must be betrayed, might be of fatal consequence to the whole army, and have obliged them to raise the siege. (6.) It will be the triumph and joy of the Ammonites, the sworn enemies of God and Israel; it will gratify them exceedingly. David prayed for himself; that he might not fall into the hands of men, nor flee before his enemies, *chap. xxiv. 13, 14.* yet he sells his servant Uriah to the Ammonites, and not for any iniquity in his hand.

2. Joab executes these orders: In the next assault that was made upon the city, Uriah has the most dangerous post assigned him, is put in hopes, that if he be repulsed by the besieged he shall be relieved by Joab, in dependence of which he marches on with resolution, but succours not coming on, the service proved too hot, and he was slain in it, *ver. 16, 17.* It was strange Joab would do so ill a thing purely upon a letter, without knowing the reason: But, 1. Perhaps, he supposed Uriah had been guilty of some great crime, to enquire into which David had sent for him, and that, because he would not punish him openly, he took this course with him to put him to death. 2. Joab had been guilty of blood, and we may suppose it pleased him very well, to see David himself falling into the same guilt, and he was willing enough to serve him in it, that he might continue to be favourable to him. It is common for those who have done ill themselves, to desire to be countenanced therein by others doing ill likewise, especially by the sin of those that are eminent in the profession of religion. Or perhaps David knew that Joab had a pique against Uriah, and could gladly be revenged on him, otherwise Joab, when he saw a cause, knew how to dispute the king's orders, as *chap. xxiv. 3. xix. 5.*

3. He sends an account of it to David. An express is dispatched away presently, with a report of this last disgrace and loss they had sustained, *ver. 18.* And to humour the thing, 1. He supposeth that David would appear to be angry at his ill conduct, would ask why they came so near the wall, *ver. 20.* Did they not know that Abimelech lost his life by doing so, *ver. 21.* We had the story, *Judg. ix. 53.* which book, it is likely was published as a part of the sacred history in Samuel's time; and (be it noted to their praise and for imitation) even the soldiers were conversant with their bibles, and could readily quote the scripture story, and make use of it for admonition to themselves not to run upon the same attempts, which they found to be fatal. 2. He sily orders the messenger to looth it up with telling him, that Uriah the Hittite was dead also, which gave too broad an intimation to the messenger, and by him to others, that David would be secretly pleased to hear that; for murder will out. And when men do such base ill things, they must expect to be bantered and upbraided with them, even by their inferiors. The messenger delivered his errand well enough, *ver. 22, 23, 24.* He makes the besieged city to fall out upon the besiegers, they came out unto us in the field, represents the besiegers as doing their part with great bravery, we were upon them, even to the entering of the gate, we forced them to retire into the city with precipitation, and so comes off with a slight mention of the slaughter made among them, by some shot from the wall, some of the king's servants are dead, and particularly Uriah the Hittite, an officer of note, stood first in the list of slain.

4. David receives the account with a secret satisfaction, *ver. 25.* Let not Joab be displeased, for David is not; he blames not his conduct;

nor thinks they did ill to approach so near the wall; all is well now Uriah is got out of the way. This point being gained, he can make light of the loss; and turn it off easily with an excuse, *the sword devours one as well as another*; it was a chance of war, nothing more ordinary. He orders Joab to make the battle more strong next time, while he by his sin was weakening it, and provoking God to blast the undertaking.

Lastly, He married the widow in a little time. She submitted to the ceremony of mourning for her husband, as little a time as custom would admit, *ver. 26.* and then David took her to his house as his wife, and she bare him a son. Uriah's revenge was prevented by his death, but the birth of the child so soon after the marriage published the crime; sin will have shame; yet that was not the worst of it, *the thing that David had done displeased the Lord*; the whole matter of Uriah, as it is called, *1 Kings xv. 5.* the adultery, falsehood, murder, and this marriage at last, it was all displeasing to the Lord. He had pleased himself, but displeased God. Note, God sees and hates sin in his own people. Nay, the nearer any are to God in profession, the more displeasing to him their sins are, for in them there is more ingratitude, treachery, and reproach than in the sins of others. Let none therefore encourage themselves in sin by the example of David, for they that sin as he did, will fall under the displeasure of God as he did. Let us therefore stand in awe, and sin not; not sin after the similitude of his transgression.

C H A P. XII.

The foregoing chapter gives us the account of David's sin, this of his repentance; though he fell he was not utterly cast down, but by the grace of God recovered himself, and found mercy with God. Here is, 1. His conviction by a message Nathan brought him from God, which was a parable that obliged him to condemn himself, ver. 1—6. And the reddition of the parable, in which Nathan charged him with the sin, ver. 7—9. and pronounceth sentence upon him, ver. 10—12. 2. His repentance and remission, with a proviso, ver. 13—14. 3. The sickness and death of the child, and his behaviour while it was sick, and when it was dead, ver. 15—23. in both which David gave evidences of his repentance. 4. The birth of Solomon, and God's gracious message concerning him, in which God gave an evidence of his reconciliation to David, ver. 24, 25. 5. The taking of Rabbah, ver. 26—31. which is mentioned as a further instance, that God did not deal with David according to his sins.

1. **A**ND the LORD sent Nathan unto David: and he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. 2. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds: 3. But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe-lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. 4. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the way-faring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him, 5. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, *As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die. 6. And he shall restore the lamb four-fold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. 7. ¶ And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee out of the hand of Saul: 8. And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things, 9. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. 10. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. 11. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. 12. For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun. 13. And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. 14. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.*

It seems to have been a great while after David had been guilty of adultery with Bath-sheba, before he was brought to repentance for it: For when Nathan was sent to him, the child was born, *ver. 14.* So that it was about nine months that David lay under the guilt of that sin, and for ought appears, unrepented of. What shall we think of David's state all this while? Can we imagine his heart never smote him for it? Or that he never lamented it in secret before God? I would willingly hope he did, and that Nathan was sent to him immediately upon the birth of the child, when the thing by that means came to be publicly known and talked of, to draw from him an open confession of the sin, of the glory of God, the admonition of others,

and that he might receive by Nathan absolution with certain limitation. But during these nine months, we may well suppose his confessions and the exercises of his graces suspended, and his communion with God interrupted, during all that time, for certain, he penned no Psalms, his lute was out of tune, and his soul like a tree in winter, that has life in the root only: therefore after Nathan had been with him he prays, *Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation and open thou my lips, Psalm li. 12—13.* Let us observe,

1. The messenger God sent to him. We were told by the last words of the foregoing chapter, that the thing David had done displeased the Lord, upon which one would think it should have followed, that the Lord sent enemies to invade him, terrors to take hold on him, and the messengers of death to arrest him: No, he sent a prophet to him, Nathan his faithful friend and confidant, to instruct and counsel him, *ver. 1.* David did not send for Nathan, though he had never so much occasion as he had now for his confessor, but God sent Nathan to David. Note, Though God may suffer his people to fall into sin, he will not suffer them to lie still in it. *He went on forwardly in the way of his heart, and if left to himself would wander endlessly, but (saith God) I have seen his ways, and will heal him, Isa. lvii. 17, 18.* He sends after us before we seek after him, else we should certainly be lost. Nathan was the prophet, by whom God had sent him notice of his kind intentions towards him, *chap. vii. 4.* and now by the same hand he sends him this message of wrath; God's word in the mouth of his ministers must be received, whether it speak terror or comfort. Nathan was obedient to the heavenly vision, and went on God's errand to David, he did not say, David has sinned, I will not come near him; no, *count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother; 2 Thess. iii. 15.* He did not say David is a king, I dare not reprove him; no, if God sends him, he sets his face like a flint; *Isa. l. 7.*

2. The message Nathan delivered to him, in order to his conviction.

1. He fetched a compass with a parable, which seemed to David as a complaint made to him by Nathan, against one of his subjects that had wronged his poor neighbour in order to his righting the injured, and punishing the injurious. Nathan, it is likely, used to come upon such errands, which made this the least suspected; it becomes those who have interest in princes, and who have free access to them, to intercede for those that are wronged, that they may have right done them.

(1.) Nathan represented to David a notorious injury, which a rich man had done to an honest neighbour of his, that was not able to contend with him. *The rich man had many flocks and herds, ver. 2.* the poor man had one only, so unequally is the world divided, and yet infinite wisdom, righteousness and goodness, makes the dividend, that the rich man may learn charity, and the poor contentment: This poor man had but one lamb, an ewe-lamb, a little ewe-lamb, having not wherewithal to buy or keep more: But it was a caddis lamb (as we call it) *it grew up with his children, ver. 3.* he was fond of it, and it was familiar with him at bed and board. The rich man having occasion for a lamb to entertain a friend with, took the poor man's lamb from him by violence, and made use of that, *ver. 4.* either out of covetousness, because he grudged to make use of his own; or rather out of luxury, because he fancied the lamb that was thus tenderly kept, and eat and drank like a child, must needs be more delicate food than any of his own; and have a better relish.

(2.) In this he shewed him the evil of the sin he had been guilty of in defiling Bath-sheba. He had many wives and concubines, whom he kept at a distance, as rich men keep their flocks in their fields; had he had but one, and she been dear to him, as the ewe-lamb was to its owner, had she been dear to him *as the loving hind and the pleasant doe, her breasts would have satisfied him at all times, and he would have looked no further, Prov. v. 19.* Marrying is a remedy against fornication, but marrying many is not, for when the law of unity is transgressed, the indulged lust will hardly stint itself. Uriah, like the poor man, had only one wife, who was to him as his own soul, and always lay in his bosom, for he had no other, he desired no other to lay there. The traveller or wayfaring man was, as bishop Patrick explains it from the Jewish writers, the evil imagination, disposition or desire, which came into David's heart, which he might have satisfied with some of his own, yet nothing would serve but Uriah's darling. They observe, that this evil disposition is called a traveller, for in the beginning it is only so, but in time it becomes a guest, and in conclusion is master of the house: For he that is here called a traveller in the beginning of the verse, is called a man (*i. e.* a husband) in the close of it. Yet some observe, that in David's breast lust was but as a wayfaring man that tarries only for a night, it did not constantly dwell and rule there.

(3.) By this parable he drew from David a sentence against himself: for David supposing it to be a case in fact, and not doubting the truth of it, when he had it from Nathan himself, gave judgment immediately against the offender, and continued it with an oath, *ver. 5, 6.* 1. That for his injustice in taking away the lamb, he should restore four-fold, according to the law, *Exod. xxii. 1. Four sheep for a sheep.* 2. That for his tyranny and cruelty, and the pleasure he took in abusing a poor man, he should be put to death. If a poor man steal from a rich man, to satisfy his soul when he is hungry, he shall make restitution, though it cost him *all the substance of his house, Prov. vi. 30, 31.* (and Solomon there compares the sin of adultery with that, *ver. 32*) but if a rich man steal for stealing sake, not for want but wantonness, purely that he may be imperious and vexatious, he deserves to die for it, for to him restitution is no punishment, or next to none. If the sentence be thought too severe, it must be imputed to the present roughness of David's temper, being under guilt, and not having himself as yet received mercy.

2. He closed in with him at length in the application of the parable. In beginning with a parable he shewed his prudence, and great need there is of prudence in giving reproofs; it is well managed if, as here, the offender can be brought, ere he is aware, to convict and condemn himself; but here in his application, he shews his faithfulness, and deals as plainly and roundly with king David himself, as if he had been a common person. In plain terms, *Thou art the man, who has done this wrong, and a much greater to thy neighbour, and therefore by thine own sentence thou deservest to die, and shalt be judged out of thine own mouth: Did he deserve to die who took his neighbour's lamb, and dost not thou, who hast taken thy neighbour's wife? Though he took the lamb, he did not cause the owner thereof to lose his life, as thou hast done, and therefore much more art thou worthy to die.*

Now he speaks immediately from God, and in his name, begins with, *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, a name sacred and venerable to David, and which commanded his attention; Nathan now speaks not as a petitioner for a poor man, but as an ambassador from the great God, with whom is no respect of persons.*

1. God by Nathan minds David of the great things he had done and designed for him, anointing him to be king, and preserving him to the kingdom, *ver. 7.* giving him power over the house and household of his predecessor, and of others that had been his masters, Nabal for one; he had given him the house of Israel and Judah, the wealth of the kingdom was at his service, and every body was willing to oblige him, and was ready to bestow any thing upon him to make him easy; *I would have given thee such and such*

such things, ver. 8. See how liberal God is in his gifts, we are not straitened in him: Where he has given much, yet he gives more. And God's bounty to us is a great aggravation of our discontent and desire of forbidden fruit. It is ungrateful to covet what God has prohibited, while we have liberty to pray for what God has promised, and that is enough.

2. He charges him with a high contempt of the divine authority, in the sins he had been guilty of. *Wherefore hast thou* (presuming upon the royal dignity and power) *despised the commandment of the Lord?* ver. 9. This is the spring, and this the malignity of sin, that it is making light of the divine law, and the law-maker: as if the obligation of it were weak, the precepts of it trifling, and the threats not at all formidable. Though no man ever wrote more honourably of the law of God than David did, yet in this instance he is justly charged with a contempt of it. His adultery with Bath-sheba, which began the mischief, is not mentioned, perhaps, because he was already convicted of that, but, 1. The murder of Uriah is twice mentioned. *Thou hast killed Uriah with the sword*, though not thy sword, yet, which is all one, with thy pen, ordering him to be slain; they that contrive wickedness and command it, are as truly guilty of it as those that execute it. It is repeated with an aggravation, *Thou hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon*, those uncircumcised enemies of God and Israel. 2. The marrying of Bath-sheba is likewise twice mentioned, because he thought there was no harm in that, ver. 9. *Thou hast taken his wife to be thy wife*, and again, ver. 10. to marry her whom he had before defiled, and whose husband he had slain, was an affront upon the ordinance of marriage, making that not only to palliate, but in a manner to consecrate such villainies. In all this he *despised the word of the Lord*, so it is in the Hebrew, not only his commandment in general, which forbade such things, but the particular word of promise, which God had, by Nathan, sent to him some time before, that he would build him a house; which sacred promise, if he had a due value and veneration for, he would not thus have polluted his house with lust and blood.

3. He threatens an entail of judgments upon his family for this sin, ver. 10. *The sword shall never depart from thy house*, not in thy time, nor afterwards, but for the most part, thou and thy posterity shall be engaged in war. Or it points at the slaughter that should be among his children, Amnon, Absalom, and Adonijah, all falling by the sword, God had promised that his mercy should not depart from him and his house, chap. vii. 15. yet here threatens that the sword should not depart. Can the mercy and the sword consist with each other? Yes, those may lie under great and long afflictions, who yet shall not be excluded from the grace of the covenant. The reason given is, because *thou hast despised me*. Note, Those who despise the word and law of God, despise God himself, and shall be lightly esteemed.

It is particularly threatened, 1. That his children should be his grief; *I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house*. Sin brings trouble into a family, and one sin is often made the punishment of another. 2. That his wives should be his shame; that by an unparalleled piece of villainy they should be publicly debauched before all Israel, ver. 11, 12. It is not said it should be done by his own son, lest the accomplishment should have been hindered by the prediction being too plain; but it was done by Absalom at the counsel of Ahithophel, chap. xvi. 21, 22. *He that defiled his neighbour's wife, should have his own defiled*, for thus that sin used to be punished, as appears by Job's imprecation, Job xxxi. 10. *Then let my wife grind unto another*, and that threatening, *Hos. iv. 14*. The sin was secret and industriously concealed, but the punishment should be open and industriously proclaimed, to the shame of David, whose sin in the matter of Uriah, though committed many years before, would then be called to mind, and commonly talked of upon that occasion. As face answers to face in a glass, so doth the punishment often answer the sin; here is *blood for blood*, and *uncleanness for uncleanness*: And thus God would shew how much he hates sin, even in his own people, and, wherever he finds it, will not let it go unpunished.

4. David's penitent confession of his sin hereupon. He saith not a word to excuse himself or extenuate his sin, but freely owns it, *I have sinned against the Lord*, ver. 13. It is likely he said more to this purpose, but this is enough to shew that he was truly humbled by what Nathan said, and submitted himself to the conviction. He owns his guilt, *I have sinned*; and aggravates it, it was *against the Lord*: on this string he hurrs in the Psalm he penned on this occasion, Psalm li. 4. *Against thee, thee only, have I sinned*.

4. His pardon declared upon this penitent confession, but with a proviso. When David said *I have sinned*, and Nathan perceived that he was a true penitent, 1. He did in God's name assure him that his sin was forgiven; *The Lord also hath put away thy sin* out of the sight of his avenging eye, *thou shalt not die*, i. e. not die eternally, nor be for ever put away from God, as thou wouldst have been if he had not put away the sin. The obligation to punishment is hereby cancelled and vacated. *He shall not come into condemnation*: That is the nature of forgiveness. Thy iniquity shall be thy everlasting ruin. *The sword shall not depart from thy house*, but, (1.) It shall not cut thee off, thou shalt come to thy grave in peace. David deserved to die as an adulterer and murderer, but God would not cut him off as he might justly have done. (2.) Though thou shalt all thy days be chastened of the Lord, yet thou shalt not be condemned with the world. See how ready God is to forgive sin: To this instance perhaps David refers, Psalm xxxii. 5. *I said I will confess, and thou forgavest*. Let not great sinners despair of finding mercy with God, if they truly repent, for who is a God like unto him pardoning iniquity? 2. Yet he pronounceth a sentence of death upon the child, ver. 14. Behold the sovereignty of God, the guilty parent lives, and the guiltless infant dies, but all souls are his, and he may in what way he pleaseth, glorify himself in his creatures. (1.) David had by his sin wronged God in his honour: he had given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. The wicked people of that generation, the infidels, idolaters and profane, would triumph in David's fall, and speak ill of God and of his law, when they saw one guilty of such foul enormities, that professed such an honour both for him and it. These are your professors? This is he that prays and sings Psalms, and is so very devout! what good can there be in such exercises, if they will not restrain men from adultery and murder? They would say, was not Saul rejected for a less matter? Why then must David live and reign still? Not considering that God *sees not as man sees, but searcheth the heart*. To this day there are those who reproach God, and are hardened in sin by the example of David. Now, though it is true, that none have any just reason to speak ill of God, or of his word and ways, for David's sake, and it is their sin that do so, yet he shall be reckoned with that laid the stumbling-block in their way, and gave, though not cause, yet colour for the reproach. Note, There is this great evil in the scandalous sins of those that profess religion and relation to God, that they furnish enemies of God and religion with matter for reproach and blasphemy, Rom. ii. 24. (2.) God will therefore vindicate his honour, by shewing his displeasure against David for this sin, and letting the world see, that though he loves David he hates his sin, and he chooseth to do it by the death of the child. The landlord may restrain

on any part of the premises where he pleaseth. Perhaps, the diseases and deaths of infants were not so common in those days as they are now, which might make this an unusual thing, the more evident token of God's displeasure, according to the word he had often said, that he would visit the sins of the fathers upon the children.

15. ¶ And Nathan departed unto his house: and the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick. 16. David therefore besought God for the child: and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth. 17. And, the elders of his house arose and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them. 18. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died: and the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not hearken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead? 19. But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? And they said, He is dead. 20. Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house, and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat. 21. Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child while it was alive, but when the child was dead, thou didst rise and eat bread. 22. And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? 23. But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me. 24. ¶ And David comforted Bath-sheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him. 25. And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.

Nathan having done his errand stayed not at court, but went home, probably to pray for David, to whom he had been preaching. God, in making use of him as an instrument to bring David to repentance, and as the herald both of mercy and judgment, put an honour upon the ministry, and magnified his word above all his name. David named one of his sons by Bath-sheba, Nathan, in honour of this prophet, 1 Chron. iii. 5. and it was that son, of whom Christ, the great prophet, lineally descended Luke iii. 31. When Nathan retired, David it is probable, retired likewise, and penned the fifty-first psalm, in which, though he had been assured that his sin was pardoned, yet he prays earnestly for the pardon of it, and greatly laments it; for then will true penitents be ashamed of what they have done, when God is pacified towards them, Ezek. xvi. 63.

Here is, 1. The child's illness. *The Lord struck it, and it was very sick*, perhaps of convulsions, or some other dreadful distemper, ver. 15. The diseases and deaths of infants, that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, especially as they are sometimes circumstanced, are sensible proofs of the original sin in which they are conceived.

2. David's humiliation under this token of God's displeasure, and the intercession he made with God for the life of the child, ver. 16, 17. *He fasted, and lay all night upon the earth*, and would not suffer any of his attendants, either to feed him, or help him up. This was an evidence of the truth of his repentance. For, 1. Hereby it appeared, that he was willing to bear the shame of his sin, to have it ever before him, and to be continually upbraided with it: for this child would be a continual memorandum of it, both to himself and others, if he lived, and therefore, he was so far from desiring its death, as most in that case do, that he prayed earnestly for its life. True penitents patiently bear the reproach of their youth, and their youthful lusts, Jer. xxxi. 19. 2. A very tender compassionate spirit appeared in this, and great humanity, above what is commonly found in men, especially men of war, towards little children, even their own: and this was another sign of a broken contrite spirit: they that are penitent will be pitiful. 3. He discovered in this a great concern for another world; which is an evidence of repentance: Nathan had told him that certainly the child should die, yet, while it is in the reach of prayer, he earnestly intercedes with God for it, chiefly (as we may suppose) that its soul might be safe and happy in another world, and that his sin might not come against the child, and that it might not fare the worse for that in the future state. 4. He discovered in this a holy dread of God, and of his displeasure. He deprecated the death of the child, chiefly as it was a token of God's anger against him and his house, and was inflicted in performance of a threatening; therefore he prayed thus earnestly, that if it were the will of God, the child might live, because that would be to him a token of God's being reconciled to him. *Lord, chasten me not in thy hot displeasure*, Psalm vi. 1.

3. The death of the child; it died on the seventh day, ver. 18. when it was seven days old, and therefore not circumcised, which David might, perhaps interpret as a farther token of God's displeasure, that it died before it was brought under the seal of the covenant, yet he doth not doubt of its being happy, for the benefits of the covenant, do not depend upon the seals. David's servants judging of him by themselves, were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, concluding that then he would disquiet himself most of all; so that he knew not till he asked, ver. 19.

4. David's wonderful calmness and composedness of spirit, when he understood the child was dead. Observe, 1. What he did. He (1.) Ceased the expressions of his sorrow, washed and anointed himself and called for clean linen, that he might decently appear before God in his house. (2.) He went up to the tabernacle and worshipped, like Job when he heard of the death of his children. He went to acknowledge the hand of God in the affliction, and to humble himself under it, and to submit to his holy will in

it: to thank God that he himself was spared, and his sin pardoned; and to pray that God would not proceed in his controversy with him, nor stir up all his wrath. *Is any afflicted? let him pray.* Weeping must never hinder worshipping. (3.) Then he went to his own house, and refreshed himself, as one who found benefit by his religion in the day of his affliction; for having worshipped, he did eat, and his countenance was no more sad. 2. The reason he gave for what he did. His servants thought it very odd that he should afflict himself for the sickness of the child, and yet take the death of it so easily; and asked him the reason of it, ver. 21. In answer to which he gives this plain account of his conduct. 1. That while the child was alive, he thought it his duty to importune the divine favour towards it, ver. 22. Nathan had indeed said the child should die, but, for ought he knew, the threatening might be conditional, as that concerning Hezekiah, and that, upon his great humiliation and earnest prayer, he that had so often heard the voice of his weeping, might be pleased to reverse the sentence, and spare the child, *Who can tell whether God will yet be gracious to me?* God gives us leave to be earnest with him in prayer, for particular blessings, from a confidence in his power and general mercy, though we have no particular promise to build upon: we cannot be sure, yet let us pray, *for who can tell but God will be gracious unto us*, in this or that particular? In this instance of the sickness of our relations and friends, the prayer of faith has prevailed much; while there is life there is hope, and while there is hope there is room for prayer.

2. That now the child was dead, he thought it as much his duty to be satisfied in the divine disposal concerning it, ver. 23. Now, wherefore, should I fast? Two things checked his grief: 1. *I cannot bring him back again*; and again, *He shall not return to me*. Those that are dead are out of the reach of prayer; nor can our tears profit them; we can neither weep nor pray them back to this life: Wherefore then should we fast: *To what purpose is this waste?* Yet David fasted and wept for Jonathan when he was dead, in honour to him. 2. *I shall go to him*; (1.) To him in the grave. Note, The consideration of our own death should moderate our sorrow at the death of our relations. It is the common lot, instead of mourning for their death, we should think of our own: and whatever loss we have of them how we shall die shortly, and go to them. (2.) To him to heaven, to a state of blessedness, which even the Old Testament saints had some expectation of. Godly parents have great reason to hope concerning their children that die in infancy; that it is well with their souls in the other world; *the promise is to us and to our seed*, which shall be performed to those that do not put a bar in their own door, as infants do not. *Facere sunt amplandi.* God calls them his children, that are born unto him, and if they be his he will save them. This may comfort us when our children are removed from us by death; they are better provided for, both in work and wealth, than they could be in this world. We shall be with them shortly, to part no more.

3. The birth of Solomon. Though David's marrying Bath-sheba had displeased the Lord, yet he was not therefore commanded to divorce her; so far from that, that God gave him that son by her, on whom the covenant of royalty should be entailed. Bath-sheba, no doubt, was greatly afflicted with the sense of her sin and the tokens of God's displeasure. But God having restored to David the joys of his salvation, he comforted her with the same comforts with which he himself was comforted of God, ver. 24. He comforted Bath-sheba. And both he and she had reason to be comforted in the tokens of God's reconciliation to them.

1. That by his providence he gave them a son, not as the former, who was given in anger, and taken away in wrath, but a child graciously given, and written among the living in Jerusalem. They called him Solomon, peaceful, because his birth was a token of God's being at peace with them, and because of the prosperity which was entailed upon him, and because he was to be a type of Christ, the prince of peace. God hath removed the son from them, but now gave them another instead of him, like Seth instead of Abel, Gen. iv. 25. Thus God often balanceth the griefs of his people with comforts, in the same thing wherein he hath afflicted them, setting the one over against the other. David had very patiently submitted to the will of God in the death of the other child, and now God made up the loss of that, abundantly to his advantage in the birth of this. The way to have our creature-comforts, either continued or restored, or the loss of them made up some other way, is cheerfully to resign them to God.

2. That by his grace he particularly owned and favoured that son; *The Lord loved him*, ver. 24. and ver. 25. ordered him, by the prophet Nathan, to be called Jedidiah, *Beloved of the Lord*; though a seed of evil-doers, for so David and Bath-sheba were, yet so well ordered was the covenant, and the crown entailed by it, that it took away all attainders, and corruption of blood, signifying, that those who were by nature children of wrath and disobedience, should by the covenant of grace, not only be reconciled, but made favourites. And, in this name, he typified Jesus Christ, that blessed Jedidiah, the son of God's love, concerning whom God declared again and again, *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*.

26. ¶ And Joab fought against Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and took the royal city. 27. And Joab sent messengers to David, and said I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters. 28. Now therefore, gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city and take it; lest I take the city, and it be called after my name. 29. And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it. 30. And he took their king's crown from off his head, (the weight whereof was a talent of gold, with the precious stones) and it was set on David's head: and he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance. 31. And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem.

We have here an account of the conquest of Rabbah, and other cities of the Ammonites. Though this comes in here after the birth of David's child, yet, it is most probable, it was done a good while before, and soon after the death of Uriah, perhaps during the days of Bath-sheba's mourning for him.

Observe, 1. That God was very gracious in giving David this great success against his enemies, notwithstanding the sin he had been guilty of, just at that time when he was engaged in this war, and the wicked use he had made of the sword of the children of Ammon in the murder of Uriah: Justly might he have made that sword, from thenceforward, a plague to David and his kingdom; yet he breaks it, and makes David's sword victorious, even before he repented, that this goodness of God might lead him to repentance. Good reason had David to own, that God dealt not with him according to his sins, Psalm ciii. 10.

2. That Joab acted very honestly and honourably: for when he had taken the city of waters, the royal city, where the palace was, and from which the rest of the city was supplied with water, and therefore, upon the cutting off of that, would be obliged speedily to surrender, he sent to David to come in person to complete this great action, that he might have the praise of it, ver. 26, 27, 28. Herein he shewed himself a faithful servant, that fought his master's honour, and his own only in subordination to his, and left an example to the servants of the Lord Jesus, in every thing they do, to consult his honour: *not unto us, but to thy name, give glory*.

3. That David was both too haughty and too severe upon this occasion, and neither so humble nor so tender as he should have been. 1. He seems to have been too fond of the crown of the king of Ammon, ver. 30. because it was of extraordinary value by reason of the precious stones with which it was set, David will have it set upon his head, though it would have been better to have cast it at God's feet, and at this time to have put his own mouth in the dust, being under guilt. The heart that is truly humbled for sin, is dead to worldly glory, and looks upon it with a holy contempt. 2. He seems to have been too harsh with his prisoners of war, ver. 31. taking the city by storm, after it had obstinately held out against a long and expensive siege; if he had put all to the sword, in the heat of battle, whom he found in arms, it had been severe enough; but to kill them afterwards in cold blood, and by cruel tortures, with saws and harrows, tearing them in pieces, did not become him, who, when he entered upon the government, promised to sing of mercy as well as judgment, Psalm ci. 1. Had he only made those examples who had abused his ambassadors, advised or assisted in it, that being a violation of the law of nations, it might be looked upon as a piece of necessary justice for terror to other nations; but to be thus severe with all the cities of the children of Ammon, (i. e. the garrisons or soldiers of the cities) was extremely rigorous, and a sign that David's heart was not yet made soft by repentance, else the bowels of his compassion would not have been thus shut up; a sign he had not yet found mercy, else he would have been more ready to shew mercy.

C H A P. XIII.

The righteous God had lately told David, by Nathan the prophet, that to chastise him for his sin, in the matter of Uriah, he would raise up evil against him out of his own house, chap. xii. 11. And here, in the very next chapter, we find the evil beginning to rise; from henceforward he was followed with one trouble after another, which made the latter part of his reign less glorious and pleasant than the former part. Thus God chastened him with the rod of men, yet assured him, that his loving kindness he would not utterly take away. Adultery and murder were David's sins, and those sins, among his children, Amnon defiling his sister Tamar, and Absalom murdering his brother Amnon, were the beginnings of his punishment, and the more grievous, because he had reason to fear this bad example might help to bring them to these wickednesses. In this chapter we have, 1. Amnon ravishing Tamar. Assisted in his plot to do it by Jonadab his kinsman, and villainously executed it, ver. 1—20. 2. Absalom murdering Amnon for it, ver. 21—39. Both great griefs to David, and the more, because he was unwillingly made accessory to both, by sending Tamar to Amnon, and Amnon to Absalom.

1. AND it came to pass after this, that Absalom the son of David had a fair sister, whose name was Tamar, and Amnon the son of David loved her. 2. And Amnon was so vexed, that he fell sick for his sister Tamar: for she was a virgin: and Amnon, thought it hard for him to do any thing to her. 3. But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother: and Jonadab was a very subtil man, 4. And he said unto him, Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day? wilt thou not tell me? And Amnon said unto him, I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister. 5. And Jonadab said unto him, Lay thee down on thy bed, and make thyself sick: and when thy father cometh to see thee, say unto him, I pray thee, let my sister Tamar come, and give me meat, and dress the meat in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it at her hand. 6. ¶ So Amnon lay down, and made himself sick; and when the king was come to see him, Amnon said unto the king, I pray thee, let Tamar my sister, come and make me a couple of cakes in my sight that I may eat at her hand. 7. Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, Go now to thy brother Amnon's house, and dress him meat. 8. So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house; (and he was laid down) and she took flour, and kneaded it, and made cakes in his sight, and did bake the cakes. 9. And she took a pan and poured them out before him, but he refused to eat. And Amnon said, Have out all men from me: and they went out every man from him. 10. And Amnon said unto Tamar, Bring me the meat into the chamber, that I may eat of thine hand; And Tamar took the cakes which she had made, and brought them into the chamber to Amnon her brother. 11. And when she had

had brought *them* unto him to eat, he took hold of her, and said unto her, Come lie with me, my sister. 12. And she answered him, Nay, my brother, do not force me: for no such thing ought to be done in Israel; do not thou this folly. 13. And I, whither shall I cause my shame to go? And as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel: Now therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from thee. 14. Howbeit, he would not hearken unto her voice; but, being stronger than she, forced her, and lay with her. 15. ¶ Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred wherewith he hated her *was* greater than the love wherewith he had loved her: and Amnon said unto her, Arise, be gone. 16. And she said unto him, *There is no cause; this evil in sending me away, is greater than the other that thou didst unto me: but he would not hearken unto her.* 17. Then he called his servant that ministered unto him, and said, Put now this *woman* out from me, and bolt the door after her. 18. And *she* had a garment of divers colours upon her: for with such robes were the king's daughters that were virgins apparelled. Then his servant brought her out, and bolted the door after her. 19. ¶ And Tamar put ashes on her head, and rent her garment of divers colours that *was* on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went on crying. 20. And Absalom her brother said unto her, Hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? but hold now thy peace, my sister: he *is* thy brother, regard not this thing. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house.

We have here a particular account of the abominable wickedness of Amnon, in ravishing his sister; a subject not fit to be enlarged upon for shame, not indeed to be mentioned without blushing, that ever any man should be so vile, especially that a son of David should be so. Amnon's character, we have reason to think, was but bad in other things; if, he had not forsaken God, he had never been given up to these vile affections. Godly parents have often been afflicted with wicked children; grace doth not run in a blood, but corruption doth. We do not find that David's children imitated him in his devotion, but his false steps they trod in, and in those did much worse, and repented not. Parents know not how fatal the consequences may be, if, in any instance, they give their children bad examples. Observe the steps of Amnon's sin.

(1.) The devil, as an unclean spirit, put it into his heart to lust after his sister Tamar. Beauty is a snare to many, it was so to her, she was fair, and therefore Amnon coveted her, *ver. 1.* They that are more than ordinary comely, have therefore no reason to be proud, but great reason to stand upon their watch. Amnon's lust was, 1. Unnatural in itself, to lust after his sister, which even natural conscience startles at, and cannot think of without horror. Such a spirit of contradiction there is in man's corrupt nature, that still it desires forbidden fruit, and the more strongly it is forbidden the more greedily it is desired. Can he entertain the thought of betraying that virtue and honour which, as a brother, he ought to have been the protector of? But what wickedness so vile, as not to find admittance into an unguarded heart left to itself? 2. It was very uneasy to him. He was so vexed, he could not gain an opportunity to solicit her chastity (for an innocent converse with her was not denied him) that he *felt sick*, *ver. 2.* Fleishly lusts are their own punishment, and not only *war against the soul*, but against the body too, and are the *rottenness of the bones*. See what a hard master sinners serve, and how heavy its yoke is.

(2.) The devil, as a subtil serpent, put it into his head how to compass this wicked design. Amnon had a friend, (so he called him, but he was really an enemy to him) a kinsman, that had in him more of David's blood (for he was his nephew) than of David's spirit, for he was a subtil man, cunning to carry on any ill design, especially an intrigue of this nature, *ver. 3.* 1. He takes notice that Amnon looked ill, and being a subtil man, concludes that he was love-sick, *ver. 4.* and asks him, *Why art thou, being the king's son, lean from day to day?* Why dost thou pine, being the king's eldest son, and heir to the crown. *Being the king's son*, (1.) Thou hast the pleasures of the court to divert thee, take those pleasures then, and with them drive away the sorrow, whatever it is. Content and comfort is not always to be found in royal palaces. With more reason may we ask dejected and disconsolate saints, why they that are the King of king's children, and heirs of the crown of life, are thus *lean from day to day*? (2.) Thou hast the power of a prince to command what thou watest and wishest for, use that power therefore, and gratify thyself. Pine not away for that which, lawful or unlawful, thou being the king's son, mayst have. *Quicquid libet licet.* Thus Jezebel to Ahab in a like case, *1 Kings xxi. 7.* *Dost not thou govern Israel?* The abuse of power is the most dangerous temptation of great ones.

(3.) Amnon having the impudence to own his wicked lust, miscalling it love (*I love Tamar*) Jonadab put him in a way to compass his design, *ver. 5.* Had he been what he pretended, Amnon's friend, he would have startled at the mention of so horrid a wickedness, would have laid before him the evil of it, what an offence it was to God, and what a wrong to his own soul, to entertain such a vile thought, of what fatal consequence it would be to him to cherish and prosecute it, would have used his subtilty to divert Amnon from it, by recommending some other person to him whom he might lawfully marry: But he seems not at all surprised at it; objects not either the unlawfulness or the difficulty, the reproach, or so much as his father's displeasure; but puts him in the way to get Tamar to his bed's-side, and then he might do as he pleased. Note, The case of those is very miserable, whose friends, instead of admonishing and reproofing them, flatter them, and forward them in their sinful ways, and are their counsellors and contrivers to do wickedly. Amnon is already sick, but goes about, he must take upon him to be so ill, (and his thin looks will give umbrage enough to the pretence) as not to be able to get up, nor to have an appetite to any thing but just that which pleaseth his fancy. Dainty meat is abhorred, *Job xxxiii. 20.* the best dish from the king's table cannot please him, but if he can eat any thing, it must be from his sister Tamar's fair hand. This is what he is advised to.

(4.) Amnon follows these directions, and by that means gets Tamar within his reach. *He made himself sick*, *ver. 6.* Thus he *lieth in wait secretly*, as a

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lion in his den to catch the poor, and to draw them into his net, *Psalms x. 8, 9.* 10. David was always fond of his children, and concerned if any thing ailed them; he no sooner hears that Amnon is sick, but he comes himself to visit him. Let parents learn hence to be tender of their children, and compassionate towards them: The sick child commonly *the mother comforteth*, *Isa. lxvi. 13.* but let not the father be unconcerned. We may suppose, David, when he came to see his sick son, gave him good counsel to make a right use of his affliction, and prayed with him, which yet did not alter his wicked purpose. At parting the indulgent father asks, Is there any thing thou hast a mind to that I can procure for thee? Yes, (Sir) saith the dissembling son, my stomach's weak, and I know not of any thing I can eat unless it be a cake of my sister Tamar's making, and I cannot be satisfied it is so unless I see her make it, and it will do me the more good if I eat it at her hand. David saw no reason to suspect any mischief intended, God hid his heart from understanding in this matter; he therefore immediately orders Tamar to go and attend her sick brother, *ver. 7.* He doth it very innocently, but afterwards, no doubt, reflected upon it with great regret. Tamar as innocently goes to her brother's chamber, neither dreading any abuse: why should she from a brother, a sick brother? Not disdaining, in obedience to her father, and love to her brother (though but her half brother) to be his nurse tender, *ver. 8, 9.* Though she was a king's daughter, a great beauty, *ver. 1.* and well dressed, *ver. 13.* yet she did not think it below her to knead cakes and bake them, nor had she done it now, if she had not been used to it. Good housewifery is not a thing below the greatest ladies, nor ought they to think it a disparagement to them. The virtuous woman whose husband sits among the elders, yet *worketh willingly with her hand*, *Prov. xxxi. 13.* Modern ages have not been destitute of such instances, nor is it so unfashionable as some would make it. Preparing for the sick should be more the care and delight of the ladies, than preparing for the nice; charity more than curiosity.

(4.) Having got her to him, he contrives to have her alone; for the adulterer (much more so vile an adulterer as this) is in care that *no eye see him*, *Job xxiv. 15.* The meat is ready, but he cannot eat while he is looked at by those about him, they must all be turned out, *ver. 9.* The sick must be humoured, and think they have a privilege to command. Tamar is willing to humour him, her chaste and virtuous soul has not the least thought of that which his polluted breast is full of; and therefore she makes no scruple of being alone with him in the inner chamber, *ver. 10.* And now the mask is thrown off, the meat is thrown by, and the wicked wretch calls her sister, and yet impudently courts her to come and lie with him, *ver. 11.* It was a base affront to her virtue, to think it possible to persuade her to consent to such wickedness, when he knew her conversation to be always exemplarily modest and virtuous: But it is common for those that live in uncleanness to think others such as themselves, at least, kinder to their sparks.

(5.) The devil, as a strong tempter, deafens his ear to all the reasonings with which she resisted his assaults, and would have persuaded him to desist. We may well imagine, what a mighty surprise and terror it was to the young lady to be thus attacked, how she blushed, and how she trembled; yet, in this great confusion, nothing could be said more pertinently, nor with greater strength of argument, than what she said to him.

1. She calls him brother, minding him of the nearness of the relation, which made it unlawful for him to marry her, much more to debauch her. It was expressly forbidden, *Lev. xviii. 9.* under a severe penalty, *Lev. xx. 17.* Great care must be taken, lest the love that should be among relations degenerate into lust.

2. She bespeaks him not to force her, which intimates, that she would never consent to it, in any degree, and what satisfaction could be taken in offering violence.

3. She lays before him the great wickedness of it. It is folly; all sin is so, especially uncleanness; it is wickedness of the worst kind; Such abominations ought not to be committed in Israel, among the professing people of God, that have better statutes than the heathen have. We are Israelites, if we do such things we are more inexcusable than others, nay our condemnation will be more intolerable, for we *reproach the Lord*, and that *worthy name by which we are called*.

4. She represents to him the shame of it, which perhaps might influence him more than the sin of it. For her part, *whither shall I cause my shame to go?* If it should be concealed, yet I shall blush to think of it as long as I live; and if ever it be known, how shall I be able to look any of my friends in the face? For his part, *thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel*, i. e. thou shalt be looked upon as an arrant rake, the worst of men; wilt lose thine interest in the esteem of all that are wise and good, and so wilt be set aside as unfit to rule, though the first-born: For Israel will never submit to the government of such a fool. Prospect of shame, especially everlasting shame, should deter us from sin.

5. To put him by his wicked purpose at this time, (if possible) to get clear of him, she intimates to him, that, probably, the king, rather than, he should die for love of her, would dispense with the divine law, and let him marry her: not as if he thought he had such a dispensing power or would pretend to it, but was confident that upon notice given to the king by himself of this wicked desire of his, which he would scarce have believed from any one else, he would take an effectual course to protect her from him.

But all her arts and all her arguments availed not. His proud spirit cannot bear a denial, but her comfort and honour and all that was dear to her must be sacrificed to his brutish and outrageous lust, *ver. 14.* It is to be feared Amnon, though young, had long lived a lewd life, which his father either knew not or punished not, for a man could not of a sudden arrive at such a pitch of wickedness as this. But is this his love to Tamar? Is this the recompence he gives her for her readiness to attend him in his sickness? Will he deal with his sister as with his harlot? Base villain! God deliver all that are modest and virtuous from such wicked and unreasonable men.

6. The devil as a tormenter and betrayer, immediately turns his love of her into hatred, *ver. 15.* *He hated her with great hatred, greatly*, so it is in the margin, and grew as outrageous in his malice, as he had been in his lust, basely turned her out of doors by force; nay, as if he now disdained to touch her with his own hands, he ordered his servants to *pull her out*, and *bolt the door after her*, *ver. 17.* Now, (1.) The innocent injured lady had reason to resent this as a great affront, and in some respects (as she saith, *ver. 16.*) worse than the former: for nothing could have been done more, barbarous and ill-natured, nor more disgraceful to her. Had he taken care to conceal what was done, her honour had been lost to her only: Had he gone down on his knees and begged her pardon, it might have been some little reparation of that: Had he given her time to compose herself after the horrid confusion she was put into, she might have kept her countenance when she went out, and so have kept her counsel: But to dismiss her thus hurried, thus rudely, as if she had done some ill thing, obliged her, in her own defence, to proclaim the wrong that had been done her. 2. We may learn from it, both the malignity of sin, unbridled passions are as bad as unbridled appetites; and the mischievous consequences of sin, at last it bites like a serpent; for here we find, (1.) That sin sweet in the commission,

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afterwards

afterwards becomes odious and painful, and the sinner's own conscience makes them so to himself. Amnon hated Tamar, because she would not consent to his wickedness, and so take part of the blame upon herself, but to the last resisted it, and reasoned against it, and so threw it upon him. Had he hated the sin, and loathed himself for it, we might have hoped he was a penitent, *Godly sorrow worketh indignation*; 2 Cor. vii. 11. but to hate the person he had abused, shewed his conscience was terrified, but his heart not at all humbled. See what deceitful pleasures those of the flesh are, how soon the lust passeth away, and turns into loathing, see *Ezek. xxiii. 17.* 2. That sins secret in the commission, afterwards become open and public, and the sinners themselves often make them so. Their own tongues fall upon them. The Jewish doctors say, that upon the occasion of this wickedness of Amnon, a law was made, that a young man and a young woman should never be alone together; for said they, if the king's daughter be so used, what will become of the children of private men?

We must now leave the criminal to the terrors of his own guilty conscience, and enquire what became of the poor lady.

1. She bitterly lamented the injury she had received; as it was a stain to her honour, though no real blemish to her virtue. She tore her fine cloaths in token of her grief, and put ashes upon her head to deform herself, loathing her own beauty and ornaments, because they had occasioned Amnon's unlawful love; and she went on crying for another's sin, *ver. 19.*

2. She retired to her brother Absalom's house, because he was her own brother, and there lived in solitude and sorrow, in token of her modesty and detestation of uncleanness. Absalom spoke kindly to her, bid her pass by the injury for the present, designing himself to revenge it, *ver. 20.* It should seem by Absalom's question, Has Amnon been with thee? That Amnon was notorious for such lewd practices, so it was dangerous for a modest woman to be with him: this the young gentleman might know, and yet Tamar be wholly ignorant of.

21. ¶ But when king David heard of all these things he was very wroth. 22. And Absalom spake unto his brother Amnon neither good nor bad; for Absalom hated Amnon, because he had forced his sister Tamar. 23. ¶ And it came to pass after two full years, that Absalom had sheep-shearers in Baal-hazor, which is beside Ephraim: and Absalom invited all the king's sons. 24. And Absalom came to the king, and said, Behold now thy servant hath sheep-shearers, let the king, I beseech thee, and his servants, go with thy servant. 25. And the king said to Absalom, Nay, my son, let us not all now go, lest we be chargeable unto thee. And he pressed him: howbeit he would not go, but blessed him. 26. Then said Absalom. If not, I pray thee, let my brother Amnon go with us. And the king said unto him, Why should he go with thee? 27. But Absalom pressed him, that he let Amnon and all the king's sons go with him. 28. ¶ Now Absalom had commanded his servants, saying, Mark ye now when Amnon's heart is merry with wine, and when I say unto you, Smite Amnon, then kill him, fear not: have not I commanded you! be courageous, and be valiant. 29. And the servants of Absalom did unto Amnon as Absalom had commanded: then all the king's sons arose, and every man gat him upon his mule and fled.

What Solomon saith of the beginning of strife, is as true of the beginning of all sin, it is as the letting forth of water; when once the flood-gates are plucked up, an inundation follows; one mischief begets another, and it is hard to say, what shall be in the end thereof.

1. We are here told, how David repented the tidings of Amnon's sin, he was very wroth, *ver. 21.* So he had reason to be, that his own son should do such a wicked thing, and draw him to be accessory to it. It would be a reproach to him, for not giving him a better education, a blot upon his family, the ruin of his pretty daughter, an ill example to his kingdom, and a wrong to his own soul: But was it enough for him to be angry? He ought to have punished his son for it, and to have put him to open shame; both as a father and as a king, he had power to do it! But the Septuagint here adds these words: *But he judged not the spirit of his son Amnon, because he loved him, because he was his first-born.* He fell into Eli's error, whose sons made themselves vile, and he frowned not on them. If Amnon was dear to him, his punishing him would have been so much the greater punishment to himself for his own uncleanness, and revenge upon himself. But he cannot bear the shame those must submit to, who correct that in others which they are conscious of in themselves, and therefore his anger must serve instead of his justice, and this hardens sinners, *Ezek. viii. 11.*

2. How Absalom repented it. He resolves already to do the part of a judge in Israel, and since his father will not punish Amnon he will from a principle not of justice, or zeal for virtue, but of revenge; because he reckons himself affronted in the abuse done to his sister: Their mother was daughter to a heathen prince, *chap. iii. 3.* which perhaps they were upbraided with sometimes by their brethren, as children of a stranger; as such a one Absalom thought his sister was now treated: and if Amnon thought her fit to be made his whore, he would think him fit to be made his slave; this enraged him, and nothing less than the blood of Amnon will quench his rage. Here we have,

1. The design conceived. *Absalom hated Amnon*, *ver. 22.* and he that hateth his brother is a murderer already, and like Cain is of that wicked one, 1 John iii. 12—15. Absalom's hatred of his brother's crime had been commendable, and his prosecuting of him for it by a due course of law, for example to others, and the making of compensation to his injured sister; but to hate his person, and design his death by assassination, was, to put a great affront upon God, by offering to repair the breach of his seventh commandment, by the violation of the sixth, as if they were not all alike sacred: *But he that said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill*, James ii. 11.

2. The design concealed. He said nothing to Amnon of this matter either good or bad, took on him as if he did not know it, but carried it towards him with his usual civility, only waiting for a fair opportunity to do him a mischief. That malice is the worst, 1. Which is hid close, and has no vent given to it. If Absalom had reasoned the matter with Amnon, he might have convinced him of his sin, and brought him to repentance; but

saying nothing, Amnon's heart was hardened, and his own more and more embittered against him, therefore rebuking our neighbour is opposed to hating him in our hearts, *Lev. xix. 17.* Let passion have vent, and it will spend itself. 2. Which is gilded over with shews of usual friendship, so Absalom's was, *his words smoother than butter, but war in his heart.* See *Prov. xxvi. 26.* 3. Which is harboured long; two full years Absalom nursed this root of bitterness, *ver. 23.* It may be at first, he did not intend to kill his brother, for if he had, he could not wait as long an opportunity to do it as he had at last, only he wanted an occasion to disgrace him, or do him some other ill turn; but in time his hatred ripened to this, that he would be no less than the death of him. If the *sun going down once upon the wrath, gives such a place to the devil* as is intimated, *Eph. iv. 26, 27.* what would the sun-sets of two full years do?

3. The design laid. 1. Absalom has a feast at his house in the country, as Nabal had, on occasion of his sheep-shearing, *ver. 23.* As great a beau as Absalom was (*chap. xvi. 26.*) and as high as he looked, he knew the state of his flocks, and looked well to his herds: Those that have no other care about their estates in the country, but how to spend them in the town, take a ready way to see the end of them: When Absalom had sheep-shearers, he would himself be with them. 2. To this feast he invited the king his father, and all the princes of the blood, *ver. 24.* No only that he might have this opportunity to pay his respects to them, but that he might make himself the more respected among his neighbours. Those that are akin to great folks, are apt to value themselves too much by their kindred. 3. The king would not go himself, because he would not put him to the expence of his entertainment, *ver. 25.* It seems, Absalom had an estate in his own hands, on which he lived like himself, the king had given it him, but would have him to be a good husband of it; in both these he is an example to parents, when their children are grown up to give them a competency to live upon, according to their rank, and then to take care that they do not live above it, especially that they be no way accessory to their doing so. It is prudence for young housekeepers to begin as they can hold out, and not to spend the wool upon the shearing of it. 4. Absalom got leave for Amnon, and all the rest of the king's sons to come and grace his table in the country, *ver. 26, 27.* Absalom had so effectually concealed his enmity to Amnon, that David saw no reason to suspect any design upon him in that particular invitation, however, let my brother Amnon go; but this would make the stroke more cutting to David, that he was himself drawn in to consent to that which gave the opportunity for it, as before, *ver. 7.* It seems, David's sons, though grown up, continued to pay that deference to their father, as not to go such a small journey as this without his leave. Thus ought children, even when they are become men and women, to honour their parents, advise with them, and do nothing material without their consent, much less against their mind.

4. The design executed, *ver. 28, 29.* Absalom's entertainment was very plentiful, for he resolves they shall all be merry with wine, at least concludes, that Amnon will be so, for he knew him apt to drink to excess. But, 2. The orders he gave to his servants concerning Amnon, that they should mingle his blood with his wine, were very barbarous. Had he challenged him, and, in reliance upon the goodness of his cause, and the justice of God, fought him himself, though that had been bad enough, yet it had been more honourable and excusable; our ancient law, in some cases, allowed trial by battle: but, to murder him, as he did, was to copy out Cain's example, only that the reason made a great difference; Abel was slain for his righteousness, Amnon for his wickedness. Observe the aggravations of this sin: 1. He would have Amnon slain, *when his heart was merry with wine*, and he was, consequently, least apprehensive of danger, and least able to resist it; but least fit to go out of the world: as if his malice aimed to destroy both soul and body, not giving him time to say, *Lord have mercy upon me.* What a dreadful surprize hath death been to many, whose hearts have been overcharged with jollity and drunkenness? 2. His servants must be employed to do it, and so involved in the guilt. He was to give the word of command, *Smite Amnon*: and then they, in obedience to him, and upon presumption that his authority would bear them out, must kill him. What an impious defiance doth he bid to the divine law, when, though the command of God is express, *Thou shalt not kill*, he bids them kill Amnon, with this warrant, *Have not I commanded you?* That is enough; *Be courageous*, and fear neither God nor man. Those servants are ill taught, and those are wicked masters that have taught them to obey them in contradiction to God. Those are too obsequious that will damn their souls to please their masters, whose big words cannot secure them from God's wrath. Masters must always command their servants, as those that know they also have a Master in heaven. (3.) He did it in the presence of *all the king's sons*, of whom it is said, *chap. viii. 18.* that they were *chief rulers*; so that it was an affront to public justice, which they had the administration of, and to the king his father, whom they represented, and a contempt of that sword which should have been a terror to his evil deeds; while his evil deeds, on the contrary, were a terror to them that bare it. 4. There is reason to suspect, that Absalom did this, not only to revenge his sister's quarrel, but to make way for himself to the throne; which he was ambitious of, and which he would stand fair for, if Amnon the eldest son was taken off.

When the word of command was given, Absalom's servant failed not to execute it, being buoyed up with an opinion, that their master, being now next heir to the crown, (for Chileab was dead, as Bishop Patrick thinks) would save them harmless. Now the threatened sword is drawn in David's house, which should not depart from it. 1. His eldest son falls by it, himself being, by his wickedness, the cause of it, and his father, by his connivance, accessory to it. 2. All his sons flee from it, and come home in a mighty fright, not knowing how far their brother Absalom's bloody design might extend. See what mischief sin makes in families.

30. ¶ And it came to pass, while they were in the way, that tidings came to David, saying, Absalom hath slain all the king's sons, and there is not one of them left. 31. Then the king arose, and tare his garments, and lay on the earth; and all his servants stood by with their clothes rent. 32. And Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother, answered and said, Let not my lord suppose that they have slain all the young men the king's sons: for Amnon only is dead: for by the appointment of Absalom this hath been determined, from the day that he forced his sister Tamar. 33. Now therefore, let not my lord the king take the thing to his heart, to think that all the king's sons are dead: for Amnon only is dead. 34. But Absalom fled. And the young man that kept the watch, lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, there came much people by the

the way of the hill-side behind him. 35. And Jonadab said unto the king, Behold, the king's sons come: as thy servant said, so it is. 36. And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of speaking, that behold, the king's sons came, and lifted up their voice and wept: and the king also, and all his servants wept very sore. 37. But Absalom fled, and went to Talmai, the son of Ammihud, king of Geshur: and David mourned for his son every day. 38. So Absalom fled, and went to Geshur, and was there three years. 39. And the soul of king David longed to go forth unto Absalom: for he was comforted concerning Amnon, seeing he was dead.

Here is, 1. The great fright that David was put into by a false report brought to Jerusalem, that Absalom had slain all the king's sons, ver. 30. It is common for fame to make ill worse; and the first news of such a thing as this, represents it more dreadful than afterwards it proves. Let us not therefore be afraid of evil tidings, while they want confirmation, but when we hear the worst, hope the best, at least hope better. However, this false news gave as much affliction to David, for the present, as if it had been true, he tore his garments and lay on the earth, while, as yet, it was only a flying story, ver. 31. It was well David had grace, he had need enough of it, for he had strong passions.

2. The rectifying of the mistake two ways. 1. By the fly suggestions of Jonadab, David's nephew, who could tell him, *Amnon only is dead*, and not all the king's sons, ver. 32, 33. and could tell him too, it was done by the appointment of Absalom, and designed from the day he forced his sister Tamar. What a wicked man was he, if he knew all this, or had any cause to suspect it, that he did not make David acquainted with it sooner, that means might have been used to make up the quarrel, or at least that David might not have thrown Amnon into the mouth of danger, by letting him go to Absalom's house. If we do not our utmost to prevent mischief, we make ourselves accessory to it: *If we say, Behold, we knew it not, doth not he that pondereth the heart consider, whether we did or no!* See Prov. xxiv. 11, 12. It is well if Jonadab was not as guilty of Amnon's death, as he was of his sin: such friends do they prove, who are hearkened to as counsellors to do wickedly; he that would not be so kind as to prevent Amnon's sin, neither would he be so kind as to prevent his ruin, when, it should seem, he might have done both. 2. By the safe return of all the king's sons, except Amnon. They, and their attendants, were presently discovered by the watch, ver. 34, 35. and soon arrived to shew themselves alive, but to bring the certain sad news that Absalom had murdered their brother Amnon. The grief David had been in for that which was not, made him the better able to bear that which was, by giving him a sensible occasion, when he was undeceived, to thank God that all his sons were not dead: yet, that Amnon was dead, and slain by his own brother, in such a treacherous barbarous manner, was enough to put the king and court, the king and kingdom, into real mourning. Sorrow is never more reasonable, than when there is sin in the case.

3. Absalom's flight from justice. *Absalom immediately fled*, ver. 34. He was now as much afraid of the king's sons, as they were of him; they fled from his malice, he from their justice: no part of the land of Israel could shelter him, the cities of refuge gave no protection to a wilful murderer; though David had let Amnon's incest go unpunished, Absalom could not promise himself his pardon for this murder; so express was the law in this case, and so well known David's justice, and his dread of blood-guiltiness. He therefore made the best of his way to his mother's relations, and was entertained by his grandfather Talmai, king of Geshur, ver. 37. and there he was protected three years, ver. 38. David not demanding him, and Talmai not thinking himself obliged to send him back, unless he were demanded.

4. David's uneasiness for his absence. He mourned for Amnon a good while, ver. 37. but, he being past recal, time wore off that grief, he was comforted concerning Amnon: It also wore off too much his detestation of Absalom's sin; instead of loathing him, as a murderer, he longs to go forth to him, ver. 39. At first he could not find in his heart to do justice on him, now he can almost find in his heart to take him into his favour again. This was David's infirmity; something God saw in his heart that made a difference, else we should have thought that he, as much as Eli, honoured his sons more than God.

C H A P. XIV.

Now Absalom threw himself out of his royal father's protection and favour we read in the foregoing chapter, which left him an exile, outlawed, and proscribed; in this chapter we have the arts that were used to bring him and his father together again, and how at last it was done; which is here recorded, to shew the folly of David in sparing him, and indulging him in his wickedness, for which he was soon after soundly corrected by his unnatural rebellion. 1. Joab, by bringing a feigned issue (as the lawyers speak) to be tried before him, in the case of a poor widow of Tekoah, gains from him a judgment in general, That the case might be so, as that the putting of a murderer to death ought to be dispensed with, ver. 1—20. 2. Upon the application of this, he gains from him an order to bring Absalom back to Jerusalem, while yet he was forbidden the court, ver. 21—24. 3. After an account of Absalom, his person and family, we are told, how at length he was introduced by Joab into the king's presence, and the king was thoroughly reconciled to him, ver. 25—33.

1. NOW Joab the son of Zeruiah perceived that the king's heart was toward Absalom. 2. And Joab sent to Tekoah, and fetched thence a wife woman, and said unto her, I pray thee, feign thyself to be a mourner, and put on now mourning apparel, and anoint not thyself with oil, but be as a woman that had a long time mourned for the dead: 3. And come to the king, and speak on this manner unto him: So Joab put the words in her mouth. 4. ¶ And when the woman of Tekoah spake to the king, she fell on her face to the ground, and did obeisance, and said, Help,

O king. 5. And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, I am indeed a widow woman, and mine husband is dead. 6. And thy handmaid had two sons, and they two strove together in the field, and there was none to part them, but the one smote the other, and slew him. 7. And, behold, the whole family is risen against thine handmaid, and they said, Deliver him that smote his brother that we may kill him, for the life of his brother whom he slew, and we will destroy the heir also: and so they shall quench my coal which is left, and shall not leave to my husband neither name nor remainder upon the earth. 8. And the king said unto the woman, Go to thine house, and I will give charge concerning thee. 9. And the woman of Tekoah said unto the king, My lord, O king, the iniquity be on me, and on my father's house: and the king and his throne be guiltless. 10. And the king said, Whosoever saith ought unto thee, bring him to me, and he shall not touch thee any more. 11. Then said she, I pray thee, let the king remember the LORD thy God, that thou wouldest not suffer the revengers of blood to destroy any more, lest they destroy my son. And he said, As the LORD liveth, there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth. 12. Then the woman said, Let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak one word unto my lord the king. And he said, Say on. 13. And the woman said, Wherefore then hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God? for the king doth speak this thing, as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished. 14. For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again: neither doth God respect any person, yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him. 15. Now therefore that I am come to speak of this thing unto my lord the king; it is because the people have made me afraid: and thy handmaid said, I will now speak unto the king; it may be that the king will perform the request of his handmaid. 16. For the king will hear, to deliver his handmaid out of the hand of the man that would destroy me and my son together out of the inheritance of God: 17. Then thine handmaid said, The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king, to discern good and bad: therefore the LORD thy God will be with thee. 18. Then the king answered and said unto the woman, Hide not from me, I pray thee, the thing that I shall ask thee, And the woman said, Let my lord the king now speak. 19. And the king said, Is not the hand of Joab with thee in all this? And the woman answered and said, As thy soul liveth, my lord the king, none can turn to the right hand or to the left from ought that my lord the king hath spoken: for thy servant Joab he bade me, and he put all these words in the mouth of thine handmaid. 20. To fetch about this form of speech hath thy servant Joab done this thing: and my lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth.

Here is, 1. Joab's design to get Absalom recalled out of banishment, his crime pardoned, and his attainer reversed, ver. 1. Joab made himself very busy in this affair. 1. As a courtier, that was studious, by all ways possible, to ingratiate himself with his prince, and improve his interest in his favour, he perceived that the king's heart was towards Absalom, and that, the heat of his displeasure being over, he still retained his old affection for him, and only wanted a friend to court him to be reconciled, and to contrive for him how he might do it, without impeachment of the honour of his justice: Joab, finding which way David's pulse beat, undertook this good office. 2. As a friend to Absalom, whom, perhaps, he had a particular kindness for, at least looked upon him as the rising sun, to whom it was his interest to recommend himself. He plainly foresaw his father would, at length, be reconciled to him, and therefore thought he would make both his friends, if he were instrumental to bring it about. 3. As a statesman, and one concerned for the public welfare. He knew how much Absalom was the darling of the people, and if David should die while he was in banishment, it might occasion a civil war between those that were for him, and those that were against him, for it is probable, though all Israel loved his person, yet they were much divided upon his case. 4. As one who was himself a delinquent, by the murder of Abner; he was conscious to himself of the guilt of blood, and that he was himself obnoxious to public justice, and therefore, whatever favour he could procure to be shewn to Absalom, would corroborate his reprieve.

2. His contrivance to do it, by laying somewhat of a parallel case before the king, which was done so dextrously, by the person he employed, that the king took it for a real case, and gave judgment upon it, as he had done upon Nathan's parable; and the judgment being in favour of the criminal, the manager might by that discover his sentiments so far, as to venture upon the application of it, and to shew, that it was the case of his own family, which, it is probable, she was instructed not to proceed to, if the king's judgment upon her case had been severe.

(1.) The person he employed is not named, but is said to be a woman of Tekoah, one whom he knew to be fit for such an undertaking: and it was requisite the scene should be laid at a distance, that David might not think it strange he had not heard of it before. It is said she was a wise woman, one

one that had a quicker wit, and a readier tongue, than most of her neighbours, *ver.* 2. the truth of the story would be the less suspected, when it came, as was supposed, from the person's own mouth.

(2.) The character she put on was that of a disconsolate widow, *ver.* 2. Joab knew such a one would have an easy access to the king, who was always ready to comfort the mourners, especially the mourning widows, having himself mentioned it among the titles of God's honour, that he is *a judge of the widows*, Psalm lxxviii. 5. God's ear no doubt, is more open to the cries of the afflicted, and his heart too, than that of the most merciful princes on earth could be.

(3.) It was a case of compassion which she had to represent to the king, and a case, in which she could have no relief, but from the chancery in the royal breast, the law, (and consequently, the judgment of all the inferior courts) being against her. She tells the king that she had buried her husband, *ver.* 5. that she had two sons that were the support and comfort of her widowed state: that these two (as young men are apt to do) fell out and fought, and one of them unhappily killed the other, *ver.* 6. that, for her part, she was desirous to protect the manslayer, for as Rebekah argued concerning her two sons, *Why should she be deprived of them both in one day?* Gen. xxvii. 46. But though she, who was nearest kin to the slain, was willing to let fall the demands of an avenger of blood, yet the other relations insisted upon it, that the surviving brother should be put to death according to law, not out of any affection, either to justice or to the memory of the slain brother, but that, by destroying the heir, (which they had the impudence to own, was the thing they aimed at) the inheritance might be theirs: and by that means they would cut off, 1. Her comfort; *they shall quench my coal*, deprive me of the only support of my old age, and put a period to all my joy in this world, which is reduced to this one coal. 2. Her husband's memory; his family will be quite extinct, and they will leave him *neither name nor remainder*, *ver.* 7.

(4.) The king promised her his favour and a protection for her son. Observe how she grew upon the king's compassionate concessions. 1. Upon the representation of her case, he promised to consider of it, and to give orders about it, *ver.* 8. This was encouraging, that he did not dismiss her petition with *currat lex*, let the law take its course; blood calls for blood, and let it have what it calls for: but he will take time to enquire, whether the allegations of her petition be true. 2. The woman is not content with this, but begs that he would immediately give judgment in her favour, and, if the matter of fact were not as she represented it, and consequently a wrong judgment given upon it, let her bear the blame, and free the king and his throne from guilt, *ver.* 9. yet her saying this would not acquit the king, if he should pass sentence without taking due cognizance of the case. 3. Being thus pressed, he makes a farther promise, that she should not be injured or insulted by her adversaries, but he would protect her from all molestation, *ver.* 10. Magistrates ought to be the patrons of oppressed widows. 4. Yet this doth not content her, unless she can get her son's pardon, and protection for him too. Parents are not easy unless their children be safe, safe for both worlds, *ver.* 11. *Let not the avengers of blood destroy my son*, for I am undone if I lose him; as good take my life as his. *Therefore let the king remember the Lord thy God*, i. e. (1.) Let him confirm this merciful sentence with an oath, making mention of the Lord our God, by way of appeal to him, that the sentence may be indisputable, and irreversible, and then I shall be easy. See *Heb.* vi. 17, 18. (2.) Let him consider what good reason there is for this merciful sentence, and then he himself will be confirmed in it. Remember how gracious and merciful the Lord thy God is, how he bears long with sinners, and doth not deal with them according to their deserts, but is ready to forgive. Remember how the Lord thy God spared Cain who slew his brother, and protected him from the avengers of blood, *Gen.* iv. 15. Remember how the Lord thy God forgave the blood of Uriah, and let the king, that has found mercy, shew mercy. Note, Nothing is more proper, or more powerful to engage us to every duty, especially to all acts of mercy and kindness, than to remember the Lord our God. (3.) This importunate widow, by pressing the matter thus close, obtains at last a full pardon for her son, ratified with an oath as she desired. *As the Lord liveth there shall not one hair of thy son fall to the earth*, i. e. I will undertake he shall come to no damage upon this account. The son of David hath assured all that put themselves under his protection, that, though they should be put to death for his sake, *not a hair of their head shall perish*, *Luke* xxi. 16—18. though they should lose for him, they should not lose by him. Whether David did well thus to undertake the protection of a murderer, whom the cities of refuge would not protect, I cannot say. But as the matter of fact appeared to him, there was not only great reason for compassion to the mother, but room enough for a favourable judgment concerning the son: he had slain his brother, but he *hated him not in time past*; it was upon a sudden provocation, and, for ought appeared, it might be done in his own defence. He pleaded not this himself, but the judge must be of council of the prisoner, and therefore *let mercy*, at this time, *rejoice against judgment*.

(5.) The case being thus adjudged in favour of her son, it is now time to apply it to the king's son Absalom. The mask here begins to be thrown off, and another scene opened: the king is surprized, but not at all displeased, to find his humble petitioner of a sudden become his reprover, his privy-counsellor, and advocate for the prince his son, and the mouth of the people, undertaking to represent to him their sense. She begs his pardon, and his patience, for what she had farther to say, *ver.* 12. and has leave to say it, the king being very well pleased with her wit and humour.

1. She supposeth Absalom's case to be, in effect, the same with that which she had put as her son's, and therefore if the king would protect her son, though he had slain his brother, much more ought he to protect his own, and to *fetch home his banished*, *ver.* 13. *Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur*. She names not Absalom, nor needed she to name him, David longed so much after him, and had him so much in his thoughts, that he was soon aware whom she meant by his banished. And in those two words, were two arguments which the king's tender spirit felt the force of: he is banished, and has for three years undergone the disgrace and terror, and all the inconveniences of banishment; *sufficient to such a one is this punishment*: but he is thy banished, thy own son, a piece of thyself, thy dear son, whom thou lovest.

It is true, Absalom's case differed very much from that which she had put: Absalom did not slay his brother upon a hasty passion, but maliciously, and upon an old grudge: not in the field, where there were no witnesses, but at the table, before all his guests. Absalom was not an only son, as her's was, David had many more, and one lately born, more likely to be his successor than Absalom, for he was called Jedidiah, because God loved him. But David was himself too well affected to the cause, to be critical in his remarks upon the disparity of the cases, and was more desirous than he could be to bring that favourable judgment to his own son, which he had given concerning her's.

2. She reasons upon it with the king, to persuade him to recal Absalom out of banishment, give him his pardon, and take him into thy favour again.

She pleads the interest which the people of Israel had in him. What is done against him, is done against the people of God, who have their eye upon him as heir of the crown, at least have their eye upon the house of David in general, with which the covenant is made, and which therefore they cannot see the diminution and decay of, by the fall of so many of its branches in the flower of their age. Therefore the king speaks as one that is faulty, for he will provide that my husband's name and memory be not cut off, and yet takes no care, though his own be in danger, which is of more value and importance than ten thousand of ours.

2. She pleads man's mortality, *ver.* 14. *we must needs die*, it is appointed for us, we cannot avoid the thing itself, nor defer it till another time. We are all under a fatal necessity of dying, and when we are dead we are past recal, as water spilt upon the ground, nay, even while we are alive we are so, we have lost our immortality, past retrieve; Amnon must have died some time, if Absalom had not killed him, and if Absalom be now put to death for killing him, that will not bring him to life again. This was poor reasoning, and would serve against the punishment of any murderer: but it should seem, Amnon was a man ill beloved by the people, and his death little lamented, and it was generally thought hard that so dear a life as Absalom's should go for one so little valued as Amnon's.

3. She pleads God's mercy and his clemency towards poor guilty sinners. *God doth not take away thy soul, or life, but deviseth means that his banished*, his children that have offended him, and are obnoxious to his justice, as Absalom is to thine, *be not for ever expelled from him*, *ver.* 14. Here are two great instances of the mercies of God to sinners, properly urged as reasons for shewing mercy. (1.) The patience he exerciseth towards them. His law is broken; yet he doth not presently take away the life of those that break it: doth not strike sinners dead, as justly he might, in the act of sin, but bears with them, and waits to be gracious. God's vengeance had suffered Absalom to live, why then should not David's justice suffer him? (2.) The provision he had made for their restoration to his favour, that though by sin they have banished themselves from him, yet they might not be expelled, or cast off for ever. Atonement might be made for sinners by sacrifice: lepers and others ceremonially unclean were banished, but provision was made for their cleansing, that though for a time excluded they might not be finally expelled. The state of sinners is a state of banishment from God. Poor banished sinners are likely to be for ever expelled from God, if some course be not taken to prevent it: it is against the mind of God that they should be so, for he is not willing that any should perish: infinite wisdom has devised proper means to prevent it; so that it is sinners own fault if they be cast off: and this instance of God's good-will towards us all, should incline us to be merciful and compassionate one towards another, *Matt.* xviii. 32, 33.

(6.) She concludes her address with a great deal of compliment to the king, and mighty expressions of her assurance, that he would do what was just and kind, both in one case and in the other, *ver.* 15, 16, 17, for as if the case had been real, still she addresseth for herself and her son, yet meaning Absalom.

1. She would not have troubled the king thus, but that the people made her afraid. Understanding it of her own case, all her neighbours made her apprehensive of the ruin she and her son were upon the brink of, from the avengers of blood, the terror of which made her thus bold in her applications to the king himself: Understanding it of Absalom's case, she gives the king to understand what he did not know before, that the nation was disgusted at his severity towards Absalom, to that degree, that she was really afraid it would occasion a general mutiny or insurrection, for the preventing of which great mischief she ventured to speak to the king himself. The fright she was in, must excuse her rudeness.

2. She applied herself to him with great confidence in his wisdom and clemency, I said *I will speak to the king myself*, and ask nobody to speak for me, for the king will hear reason, even from so mean a creature as I am, will hear the cries of the oppressed, and will not suffer the poorest of his subjects to be *destroyed out of the inheritance of God*, i. e. driven out of the land of Israel, to seek for shelter among the uncircumcised; as Absalom is, whose case is so much the worse, that being *shut out of the inheritance of God*, he wants God's law and ordinances which might help to bring him to repentance; and is in danger of being infected with the idolatry of the heathen, among whom he sojourns, and of bringing home the infection afterwards. To engage the king to grant her request she expresseth herself very confidently, that his answer would be comfortable, and such as angels bring, (as Bishop Patrick explains it) who are messengers of divine mercy. What this woman saith by way of compliment, the prophet saith by way of promise, *Zech.* xii. 8. *then when the weak shall be as David, the house of David shall be as the angel of the Lord*. And in order to this, *the Lord thy God will be with thee*, to assist thee in this and every judgment thou givest. Great expectations are great engagements, especially to persons of honour to do their utmost not to disappoint those that depend upon them.

Lastly, The hand of Joab is suspected by the king, and acknowledged by the woman to be in all this, *ver.* 18, 19, 20.

1. The king soon suspected it: For he could not think such a woman as this would have addressed to him in a matter of such moment of her own head: And he knew none so likely to set her on as Joab, who was a politic man and a friend of Absalom's.

2. The woman very honestly owned it. Thy servant Joab he bade me. If it be well done, let him have the thanks; if ill, let him have the blame. Though she found it very agreeable to the king; yet she would not take the praise of it to herself, but speaks the truth as it was, and gives us an example to do likewise, and never to tell a lie for the concealing of a well-managed fraud, *Dare to be true, nothing can need a lie*.

21. ¶ And the king said unto Joab, Behold now, I have done this thing: go therefore, bring the young man Absalom again. 22. And Joab fell to the ground on his face, and bowed himself, and thanked the king; and Joab said, To day thy servant knoweth that I have found grace in thy sight, my lord, O king, in that the king hath fulfilled the request of his servant. 23. So Joab arose and went to Geshur, and brought Absalom to Jerusalem. 24. And the king said, Let him turn to his own house, and let him not see my face. So Absalom returned to his own house, and saw not the king's face. 25. But in all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom, for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head, there was no blemish in him. 26. And when he polled his head (for it was at every year's end that he polled it: because

because *the hair* was heavy on him, therefore he polled it) he weighed the hair of his head at two hundred shekels after the king's weight. 27. And unto Absalom there were born three sons and one daughter, whose name *was* Tamar: she was a woman of a fair countenance.

Here is, 1. Orders given for the bringing back of Absalom; the errand on which the woman came to David was so agreeable, and her management of it so very ingenious and surprizing, that he was now got into a wonderful good humour: Go (saith he to Joab) *bring the young man Absalom again*, ver. 21. He was himself inclined to favour him, yet for the honour of his justice he would not do it but upon intercession made for him, which may illustrate the methods of divine grace: It is true, God has thought of compassion towards poor sinners, not willing that any should perish, yet he is reconciled to them through a mediator, who intercedes with him on their behalf and to whom he has given these orders, *Go, bring them again: God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself*, and he came to this land of our banishment to bring us to God.

Joab having received these orders, 1. Returns thanks to the king for doing him the honour to employ him in an affair so universally grateful, ver. 22. Joab took it as a kindness to himself, and (some think) as an indication, that he would never call him to an account for the murder he had been guilty of: But if he meant so, he was mistaken, as we shall find, 1 Kings ii. 5, 6. 2. Delays not to put them in execution: he brought Absalom to Jerusalem, ver. 23. I see not how David can be justified in suspending the execution of the ancient law, Gen. ix. 6. *Whoso shed's man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed*, in which a righteous magistrate ought not to acknowledge even his brethren, or know his own children. God's laws were never designed to be like cobwebs which catch the little flies, but suffer the great ones to break through. God justly made Absalom a scourge to him, whom his foolish pity thus spared. But though he allowed him to return to his own house, he forbade him the court, and would not see him himself, ver. 24. He put him under this interdict, (1.) For his own honour, that he might not seem to countenance so great a criminal, nor to forgive him too easily. (2.) For Absalom's greater humiliation. Perhaps he had heard something of his carriage, when Joab went to fetch him, which gave him too much reason to think he was not truly penitent, he therefore put him under this mark of his displeasure, that he might be awakened to a sight of his sin, and sorrow for it, and might have his peace with God; upon the first notice of which, no doubt, David would be forward to receive him again into his favour.

2. Occasion taken from hence to give an account of Absalom. Nothing is said of his wisdom and piety; though he was the son of such a devout father, we read nothing of his devotion; parents cannot give grace to their children, though they give them never so good education: All that is here said of him is, 1. That he was a very handsome man; there was not his fellow in all Israel for beauty, ver. 25. A poor commendation for a man that had nothing else in him valuable. Handsome are they that handsome do. Many a polluted deformed soul dwells in a fair and comely body, witness Absalom's, that was polluted with blood, and deformed with unnatural disaffection to his father and prince: In his body there was no blemish, but in his mind nothing but wounds and bruises. Perhaps this was one reason why his father was so fond of him, and protected him from justice. Those have reason to fear affliction in their children, who are better pleased with their beauty than with their virtue. 2. That he had a very fine head of hair. Whether it was the length or colour, or extraordinary softness of it, something there was which made it very valuable, and very much an ornament to him, ver. 26. This notice is taken of his hair, not as a Nazarite (he was far from that strictness) but as a beau. He let it grow till it was a burden to him, and was heavy on him, nor would he cut it, as long as ever he could bear it; as pride feels no cold, so it feels no heat, and that which feeds and gratifies it is not complained of, though very uneasy. When he did poll it at certain times, for ostentation he had it weighed, that it might be seen how much it excelled other mens, and it weighed two hundred shekels, which some reckon to be three pounds and two ounces of our weight, and with the oil and powder, especially if it were powdered (as Josephus saith the fashion then was, with gold dust; Bishop Patrick thinks is not at all incredible that it should weigh so much. This fine hair proved his halter, chap. xviii. 9. 3. That his family began to be built up. It is probable he was a good while before he had a child, and then it was, that despairing of having one, he set up that pillar which is mentioned, chap. xviii. 18. to bear up his name; but afterwards he had three sons, and one pretty daughter, ver. 27. Or perhaps these sons, while he was hatching his rebellion, were all cut off by the righteous hand of God, and thereupon he set up that monument.

28. ¶ So Absalom dwelt two full years in Jerusalem, and saw not the king's face. 29. Therefore Absalom sent for Joab, to have sent him to the king; but he would not come to him: and when he sent again, the second time, he would not come. 30. Therefore he said unto his servants, See, Joab's field is near mine, and he hath barley there; go and set it on fire: And Absalom's servants set the field on fire. 31. Then Joab arose and came to Absalom unto his house, and said unto him, Wherefore have thy servants set my field on fire? 32. And Absalom answered Joab, Behold, I sent unto thee, saying, Come hither, that I may send thee to the king, to say, Wherefore am I come from Geshur? *it had been good for me to have been there still*: now therefore let me see the king's face; and if there be any iniquity in me, let him kill me. 33. So Joab came to the king, and told him; and when he had called for Absalom, he came to the king, and bowed himself on his face to the ground before the king; and the king kissed Absalom.

Three years Absalom had been an exile with his father-in-law, and now two years a prisoner at large in his own house, and in both better dealt with than he deserved; and yet his spirit was still unhumiliated, his pride unmortified, and instead of being thankful that his life is spared, he thinks himself sorely wronged that he is not restored to all his places at court. Had he truly repented of his sin, his distance from the gaieties of the court, and his

solitude and retirement in his own house, especially being in Jerusalem the holy city, would have been very agreeable to him. If a murderer must live, yet let him be forever a recluse. But Absalom cannot bear this just and gentle mortification; he longs to see the king's face, pretending it was because he loved him, but really because he wanted an opportunity to supplant him. He cannot do his father a mischief, till he is reconciled to him: this therefore is the first branch of his plot; this snake cannot sting again, till he be warmed in his father's bosom: How he gained this point, not by pretended submissions and promises of reformation, but (would you think it?) by huffing and hectoring. We are here told,

1. By his insolent carriage towards Joab, he brought him to mediate for him. Once and again he sent to Joab to come to speak with him, for he durst not go to him, but Joab would not come to him, ver. 29, probably because Absalom had not owned the kindness he had done him, in bringing him to Jerusalem, so gratefully as he thought he should have done; proud men take every service done them for a due debt. Now one would have thought a person in Absalom's circumstances should have sent to speak Joab fair, and offer him a large gratuity, should have made him a noble present; courtiers expect it; no, he bids his servants set Joab's corn-fields on fire, ver. 30. as spiteful a thing as he could do. Samson could not think of a greater injury to do the Philistines than this. Strange, that Absalom should think that by doing Joab a mischief, to prevail with him to do him a kindness: or to recommend himself to the favour of his prince or people; by shewing himself so very malicious and ill-natured, and such an enemy to the public good, for the fire might spread to others corn. Yet by this means he brings Joab to him, ver. 31. Thus God by afflictions brings those to him that kept at a distance from him. Absalom was obliged by the law to make restitution, Exod. xxii. 6. yet we do not find that either he offered it, or that Joab demanded it: Joab (it might be) thought he could not justify his refusal to come to speak with him, and therefore Absalom thought he could justify this way to fetch him. And now Joab (perhaps frightened at the surprizing boldness and fury of Absalom, and apprehensive that he had made an interest in the people strong enough to bear him out in doing the most daring things, else he would never have done this) not only puts up this injury, but goes on this errand to the king. See what some men can do by threats, and carrying things with a high hand.

2. By his insolent message (for I can call it no better) to the king, he recovered his place at court, to see the king's face, which is the periphrasis of a privy counsellor, Eccl. i. 14. 1. His message was haughty and imperious, and very unbecoming either a son or subject, ver. 32. He undervalued the favour that had been shewed him in recalling him from banishment, and restoring him to his own house, and that in Jerusalem; *Wherefore am I come from Geshur?* He denied his own crimes, though most notorious, and will not own that there was any iniquity in him, intimating, that therefore he had been wronged in the rebuke he had been under. He defies the king's justice, let him kill me, if he can find in his heart, knowing he loved him too well to do it.

(2.) Yet with this message he carried his point, ver. 33. David's strong affection for him, continued all this to be the language of a great respect to his father, and an earnest desire of his favour, when alas, it was nothing less. See how easily wife and good men may be imposed upon by their own children that design ill, especially when they are blindly fond of them. Absalom, by a low congee, testified his submission to his father, *He bowed himself on his face to the ground*; and David with a kiss sealed his pardon. Did the bowels of a father prevail to reconcile him to an impenitent son, and shall penitent sinners question the compassion of him who is the Father of mercy? if Ephraim bemoan himself, God soon bemoans him, with all the kind expressions of a fatherly tenderness, *he is a dear son, and a pleasant child*, Jer. xxxi. 20.

C H A P. XV.

Absalom's name signifies the peace of his father, yet he proves his greatest trouble, so often are we disappointed in our expectations from the creature. The sword entailed upon David's house had hitherto been among his children, but now it begins to be drawn against himself, with this aggravation, that he may thank himself for it, for had he done justice upon the murderer he had prevented the traitor. The story of Absalom's rebellion begins with this chapter, but we must go over two or three more before we see the end of it. In this chapter we have, (1.) The arts Absalom used to insinuate himself into the people's affection, ver. 1—6. (2.) His open avowing his pretensions to the crown at Hebron, whither he went under colour of a vow, and the strong party that appeared for him there, ver. 7—12. (3.) The notice brought of this to David, and his flight from Jerusalem thereupon, ver. 13—18. In his flight we are told, 1. What passed between him and Ittai, ver. 19—22. 2. The concern of the country for him, ver. 23. 3. His conference with Zadoc, ver. 24—29. (4.) His tears and prayers upon this occasion, ver. 30, 31. 5. Matters concerted by him with Hushai, ver. 32—37. Now the word of God was fulfilled, that he would raise up evil against him out of his own house, chap. xli. 10.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, after this, that Absalom prepared him chariots, and horses, and fifty men to run before him, 2. And Absalom rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. 3. And Absalom said unto him, See; thy matters are good and right, but *there is no man deputed* of the king to hear thee. 4. Absalom said, moreover, O that I were made judge in the land; that every man which hath any suit or cause might come unto me, and I would do him justice. 5. And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obedience, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. 6. And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.

Absalom is no sooner restored to his place at court, but he aims to be in the throne. He that was unhumiliated under his troubles, became insufferably

bly proud when they were over: and he cannot be content with the honour of being the king's son, and the prospect of being his successor, but he must be king now. His mother was a king's daughter, on that perhaps he valued himself, and despised his father, who was but the son of Jesse. She was the daughter of a heathen king, which made him the less concerned for the peace of Israel: And David, in this unhappy issue of that marriage, smarted for his being unequally yoked with an unbeliever.

When Absalom was restored to the king's favour, if he had had any sense of gratitude, he would have studied how to oblige his father and make him easy; but quite contrary, he meditates how to undermine him, by stealing the hearts of the people from him. Two things recommend a man to popular esteem: greatness and goodness.

1. Absalom looks great, *ver. 1.* He had learned of the king of Geshur, which was not allowed to the kings of Israel, to multiply horses, which make him look desirable, while his father on his mule looks despicable. The people desired a king like the nations, and such a one Absalom will be, appearing in pomp and magnificence, above what had been seen in Jerusalem. Samuel had foretold that this would be the manner of the king, he shall have chariots and horsemen, and some shall run before his chariots, 1 Sam. viii. 11. and this is Absalom's manner. Fifty foot-men (in rich liveries we may suppose) running before him, to give notice of his approach, would highly gratify his pride, and the people's foolish fancy. David thinks it is designed only to grace his court, and connives at it. Those parents know not what they do, who indulge a proud humour in their children, for I have seen more young people ruined by pride, than by any one lust whatsoever.

2. Absalom will seem very good too, but with a very bad design. Had he approved himself a good son, and a good subject, and set himself to serve his father's interest, he had done his present duty, and shewed himself worthy of future honours after his father's death: Those that know how to obey well, know how to rule: But to shew how good a judge and how good a king he will be, is but to deceive himself and others. Those are good indeed, that are good in their own place, not that pretend how good they will be in other people's places: But this is all the goodness we find in Absalom.

1. He wished that he were a judge in Israel, *ver. 4.* he had all the pomp and all the pleasure he could wish, lived as great and as easy as any man could, yet this will not content him, unless he have power too, *O that I were a judge in Israel!* He that should himself have been judged to death for murder, has the impudence to aim at being judge of others: We read not of Absalom's wisdom, virtue, or learning in the laws, nor had he given any proofs of his love to justice, but the contrary; yet he wishes he were a judge. Note, Those are commonly most ambitious of preferment that are least fit for it, the best qualified are the most modest and self-diffident; while it is no better than the spirit of an Absalom, that saith, *O that I were a judge in Israel!*

2. He takes a very ill course to compass his wish. Had he humbly petitioned his father to employ him in the administration of justice, and studied to qualify himself for it, (according to the rule, *Exod. xviii. 21.*) no doubt he had been sure of the next judge's place that fell: but that is too mean a post for his proud spirit: It is below him to be subordinate, though to the king his father: he must be supreme or nothing: And such a judge as that, every man that has any cause might come to him; in all causes, and over all persons he must preside: little thinking what a fatigue this would be, to have every man come to him: Moses himself could not bear it. Those know not what power is, that grasp at so much; so very much.

To gain the power he aims at, he endeavours to insinuate into the people's minds,

1. An ill opinion of the present administration as if the affairs of the kingdom were altogether neglected, and no care taken about them. He picked up all he could that had business at the counsel board, enquired what their business was; and, 1. Upon a slight and general enquiry into their cause, he pronounced it good; *thy matters are right.* A fit man indeed to be a judge, who would give judgment upon hearing one side only! For he has a bad cause indeed, that cannot put a good colour upon it, when he himself has the telling of the story. But, 2. He told them it was to no purpose to appeal to the throne, *For there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee.* The king is himself old and past business; or so taken up with his devotions that he never minds business; his sons were so addicted to their pleasures, that though they had the name of chief rulers, they took no care of the affairs committed to them; he farther seems to insinuate, what a great loss there was of him, while he was banished and confined, and how much the public suffered by it: what his father said truly in Saul's reign, *Psal. lxxv. 3.* he saith falsely, *the land and all the inhabitants of it are dissolved,* all will go to wreck and ruin, unless I bear up the pillars of it. Every appellant shall be made to believe that he will never have justice done him, unless Absalom be vice-roy, or lord justice. It is the way of turbulent factious aspiring men to reproach the government they are under, *Presumptuous are they, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignities,* 2 Pet. ii. 10. Even David himself the best of kings, and his administration, could not escape the worst of censures. They that aim to usurp, cry out of grievances, and pretend to design nothing else but the redress of them: As Absalom here,

2. A good opinion of his fitness to rule. That the people might say, *O that Absalom were a judge* (and they are apt enough to desire changes) he recommends himself to them, 1. As very diligent, he rose up early, and appeared in public before the rest of the king's sons were stirring, and he stood beside the way of the gate, where the courts of judgment sat, as one mightily concerned to see justice done, and public business dispatched. 2. As very inquisitive and prying, and desirous to be acquainted with everyone's case. He would know of what city every one was that came for judgment, that he might inform himself concerning every part of the kingdom, and the state of it, *ver. 2.* 3. As very familiar and humble: If any Israelite offered to do obedience to him, he took him and embraced him as a friend, hugged him, and kissed him. No man's carriage could be more condescending, while his heart was as proud as Lucifer's. Ambitious projects are often carried on by a *show of humility*, Col. ii. 23. He knew what a grace it puts upon greatness to be affable and courteous, and how much it wins upon common people: had he been sincere in it, it had been his praise, but to fawn upon people, that he might betray them, was abominable hypocrisy: *He crouched and humbled himself, to draw them into this net,* Psalm x. 9, 10.

7. ¶ And it came to pass after forty-years, that Absalom said unto the king, I pray thee let me go and pay my vow, which I have vowed unto the LORD, in Hebron. 8. For thy servant vowed a vow while I abode at Geshur in Syria, saying, If the LORD shall bring me again indeed to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD. 9. And the king said unto him, Go in peace. So he arose, and went to Hebron. 10. ¶ But

Absalom sent spies throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, As soon as ye hear the found of the trumpet, then ye shall say, Absalom reigneth in Hebron, 11. And with Absalom went two hundred men out of Jerusalem, that were called, and they went in their simplicity, and they knew not any thing. 12. And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor; from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices: and the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom.

We have here the breaking out of Absalom's rebellion, which he had long been contriving. It is said to be after forty years, *ver. 7.* But whence that is to be dated, we are not told, not from David's beginning his reign, for then it would fall in the last year of his life, which is not probable, but either from his first anointing by Samuel seven years before, or rather (I think) from the people's desiring a king, and the first change of the government into a monarchy; which might be about ten years before David began to reign; and it is fitly dated from thence, to shew that the same restless spirit was still working, and still they were given to change: As soon now of a new man, as then of a new model. So it fell about the thirtieth year of David's reign: Absalom's plot being now ripe for execution.

1. The place he chose for the rendezvous of his party was Hebron; the place where he was born, and where his father began his reign, and continued it several years, which would give some advantage to his pretensions. Every one knew Hebron to be a royal city; and it lay in the heart of Judah's lot, in which tribe, probably, he thought his interest strong.

2. The pretence he had both to go thither, and to invite his friends to him there, was, to offer a sacrifice to God, in performance of a vow he had made during his banishment, *ver. 7, 8.* We have cause enough to suspect, that he had not made any such vow, it doth not appear that he was so religiously inclined: but he that stuck not at murder and treason, would not make conscience of a lie to serve his purpose: if he said he had made such a vow, nobody could disprove him. Under this pretence,

(1.) He got leave of his father to go to Hebron. He would be well pleased to hear that his son in his exile was so desirous to return to Jerusalem, not only his father's city, but the city of the living God; that he looked up unto God to bring him back; that he had vowed, if he were brought back, to serve the Lord, whose service he had hitherto neglected; and that now he was brought back he remembered his vow, and resolved to perform it: And if he think fit to do it in Hebron, rather than in Zion or Gibeon, the good king is so well pleased with the thing itself, that he will not object against his choice of the place; see how willing tender parents are to believe the best concerning their children, and upon the least indication of good, to hope, even concerning those that have been untoward, that they will repent and reform. But how easy is it for children to take advantage of their good parents credulity, and to impose upon them with the shews of religion, while still they are what they were! David was overjoyed to hear that Absalom inclined to serve the Lord, and therefore readily gave him leave to go to Hebron, and to go thither with solemnity.

(2.) He got a good number of sober substantial citizens to go along with him, *ver. 11.* There went two hundred men with him, probably of the principal men of Jerusalem, whom he invited to join with him in his feast upon his sacrifice, and they went in their felicity, not in the least suspecting that Absalom had any ill design in this journey. He knew it was to no purpose to tempt them into this plot, they were inviolably firm to David, but he drew them in to accompany him, that the common people might think they were in his interest, and that David was deserted by some of his best friends. Note, It is no new thing for very good men and very good things to be made use of by designing men, to put a colour upon ill practices. When religion is made a stalking horse, and sacrifice a shaming horn to sedition and usurpation, it is not to be wondered at, if some that are well affected to religion, as these followers of Absalom here, are imposed upon by the fallacy, and drawn in to give countenance to that, with their names, which in their heart they abhor, not having known the depths of Satan.

3. The project he laid was, to get himself proclaimed king throughout all the tribes of Israel, upon a signal given, *ver. 10.* Spies were sent abroad to be ready in every country to receive the notice with satisfaction and acclamations of joy, and to make the people believe, that the news was both very true and very good, and that they were all concerned to take up arms for their new king. Upon the sudden spreading of this proclamation, *Absalom reigns in Hebron,* some would conclude David was dead, others that he had resigned, and by this means, they that were in the secret would draw in many to appear for Absalom, and come in to his assistance, that, if they had rightly understood the matter, would have abhorred the thought of it, but being drawn in would stick to him. See what artifices ambitious men use for the compassing of their ends; and in matters of state, let us not be forward to believe every spirit, but try the spirits.

4. The person he especially courted and relied upon in this affair was Ahithophel, a politic thinking man, and one that had a clear head, and a great compass of thought, that had been David's counsellor, (his guide and his acquaintance, *Psal. lv. 13.* his familiar friend in whom he trusted, which did eat of his bread, *Psal. xli. 9.*) But upon some disgust of David's against him, or his against David, was banished, or retired from public business, and lived privately in the country. How should a man of such good principles as David, and such corrupt principles as Ahithophel, long agree? A sifter tool Absalom could not find in all the kingdom, than one that was so great a statesman, and yet was disaffected to the present ministry: While Absalom was offering his sacrifices in performance of his pretended vow, he sent for this man. So much was his heart upon the projects of his ambition, that he could not stay to make an end of his devotion; which shewed what his eye was upon in all, and that it was but for a pretence that he made long offerings.

5. The party that joined with him, proved at last very considerable. The people increased continually with Absalom, which made the conspiracy strong and formidable. Every one whom he had complimented and caressed, and pronounced his matters right and good, (especially, if afterwards the cause went against him) not only came himself, but made all the interest he could for him, so that he wanted not for numbers. The majority is no certain rule to judge of equity by. *All the earth wandered after the beast.* Whether Absalom formed this design purely in the height of his ambition and fondness to rule, or whether there were not in it also malice against his father, and revenge for his banishment and confinement, though it was so much less than he deserved, doth not appear: But generally that which aims at the crown, aims at the head that wears it.

13. ¶ And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom.

14. And

14. And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not *else* escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword. 15. And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint. 16. And the king went forth, and all his household after him: and the king left ten women, which were concubines to keep the house. 17. And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off. 18. And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king. 19. ¶ Then said the king to Ittai, the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king: for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. 20. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee. 21. And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be. 22. And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him. 23. And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over: the king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, towards the way of the wilderness.

Here is, 1. The notice brought to David of Absalom's rebellion, *ver.* 13. The matter was bad enough, and yet it seems to have been made worse to him (as such things commonly are) than really it was; for he was told, that the hearts of the men of Israel, i. e. the generality of them, at least the leading men, were after Absalom. But David was the more apt to believe it, because now he could call to mind the arts Absalom had used to inveigle them, and perhaps reflected upon it with regret, that he had not done more to counterwork him, and secure his own interest, which he had been too confident of. Note, It is the wisdom of princes, to make sure of the hearts of their subjects, for if they have them, they have their purses and arms, and all at their service.

2. The alarm this gave to David, and the resolutions he came to thereupon. We may well imagine him, in a manner thunderstruck, when he heard that the son he loved so dearly, and had been so indulgent to, was so unnaturally and ungratefully in arms against him. Well might he say with Caesar, *Kai ou teknon; What, thou my son?* Let not parents raise their hopes too high from their children, lest they be disappointed. David did not call a council, but consulting only with God and his own heart, determined immediately to quit Jerusalem, *ver.* 14. He took up this strange resolve, so disagreeable to his character as a man of courage, either, 1. As a penitent, submitting to the rod, and lying down under God's correcting hand. Conscience now minded him of his sin in the matter of Uriah, and the sentence he was under for it, which was, that evil should arise against him out of his own house; now, thinks he, the word of God begins to be fulfilled, and it is not for me to contend with it, or fight against it; God is righteous, and I submit. Before unrighteous Absalom he could justify himself, and stand it out, but before the righteous God he must condemn himself, and yield to his judgments. Thus he accepts the punishment of his iniquity. Or, 2. As a politician. Jerusalem was a great city, but not tenable, it should seem by David's prayer, *Psalms* li. 18. that the walls of it were not built up, much less was it regularly fortified: it was quite too big to be garrisoned by so small a force as David had now with him: he had reason to fear the generality of the inhabitants were too well affected to Absalom, to be true to him: should he fortify himself there, he might lose the country, in which, especially among those that lay farthest from Absalom's tampering, he hoped to have the most friends. And he had such a kindness for Jerusalem, that he was loth to make that the seat of war, and expose it to the calamities of a siege, but will rather quit it tamely to the rebels. Note, Good men, when they suffer themselves, care not how few are involved with them in suffering.

His hasty flight from Jerusalem. His servants agreed to the measures he took, and faithfully adhered to him, *ver.* 15. and assured him of their inviolable allegiance. Whereupon, 1. He went out of Jerusalem himself on foot, while his son Absalom had chariots and horses. It is not always the best man nor the best cause that makes the best figure. See here, not only the servant, but the traitor on horseback, while the prince, the rightful prince, walks as a servant upon the earth, *Eccles.* x. 7. Thus he chose to do, to abase himself so much the more under God's hand, and in condescension to his friends and followers, with whom he would foot it, in token that he would live and die with them. 2. He took his household with him, his wives and children, that he might protect them in this day of danger, and they be a comfort to him in this day of grief. Masters of families, in their greatest frights, must not neglect their households. Ten women, that were concubines, he left behind to keep the house, thinking the weakness of their sex would secure them from murder, and their age and relation to him, would secure them from rape, but God over-ruled this for the fulfilling of his word. 3. He took his life-guard with him, or band of pensioners; the Cherethites and Pelethites, who were under the command of Benaiah; and the Gittites, who were under the command of Ittai, *ver.* 18. These Gittites seem to have been, by birth, Philistines of Gath, who came, a regiment of them, six hundred in all, to enter themselves in David's service, having known him at Gath, and being greatly in love with him for his virtue and piety, and having embraced the Jews religion. David made them his guards du corps, his immediate attendants, and those stuck to him in his distress. The Son of David found not so great faith in Israel, as in a Roman centurion, and a woman of Canaan. 4. As many as would of the people of Jerusalem he took with him, and made a halt at some distance from the city to draw them up, *ver.* 17. He compelled none; they whose hearts were with Ab-

salom, to Absalom let them go, and so shall their doom be, they will soon have enough of him, Christ lists none but volunteers.

4. His discourse with Ittai the Gittite, who commanded the Philistine profelytes. 1. David dissuaded him from going along with him, *ver.* 19, 20. Though he and his men might be greatly serviceable to him, yet, (1.) He would try whether he were hearty for him, and not inclined to Absalom: he therefore bids him return to his post in Jerusalem, and serve the new king. If he were no more but a soldier of fortune (as we say) he would be for that side which would pay and prefer him best; and to that side let him go. (2.) If he were faithful to David, yet he would not have him exposed to the fatigues and perils he now counted upon. David's tender spirit cannot bear to think that a stranger and an exile, a profelyte, and a new convert, who ought, by all means possible, to be encouraged and made easy, should at his first coming, meet with such hard usage. Should I make thee go up and down with us? No, return with thy brethren. Generous souls are more concerned at the share others have in their troubles, than at their own. Ittai shall therefore be dismissed with a blessing, *Mercy and truth be with thee*, i. e. God's mercy and truth, mercy according to promise, the promise made to those who renounced other gods, and put themselves under the wings of the divine Majesty. This is a very proper pious farewell, when we part with a friend, *Mercy and truth be with thee*, and then thou art safe, and mayest be easy wherever thou art. David's dependance was upon the mercy and truth of God for comfort and happiness, both for himself and his friends; see *Psalms* lxi. 7. 2. Ittai bravely resolves not to leave him; *ver.* 21. where David is, whether in life or death, safe or in peril, there will this faithful friend be: and he confirms his resolution with an oath, that he might not be tempted to break it: such a value has he for David, not for the sake of his wealth and greatness, for then he would have deserted him, now he saw him thus reduced; but for the sake of his wisdom and goodness, which were still the same, that whatever comes of it he will never leave him. Note, That is a friend indeed, who loves at all times, and will stick to us in adversity. Thus should we cleave to the Son of David, with full purpose of heart, that neither life nor death shall separate us from his love.

5. The common people's sympathy with David in his affliction. When he and his attendants passed over the brook Kidron (the very same brook that Christ passed over when he entered upon his sufferings, *John* xviii. 1.) toward the way of the wilderness, which lay between Jerusalem and Jericho, all the country wept with a loud voice, *ver.* 23. Cause enough there was for weeping; 1. To see a prince thus reduced; one that had lived so great, forced from his palace, and in fear of his life, with a small retinue, seeking shelter in a desert: the city of David which he himself won, built and fortified, made too hot for David himself: it would move the compassion, even of strangers, to see a man fallen thus low from such a height, and this by the wickedness of his own son; a piteous calamity was. Parents that are abused and ruined by their own children merit the tender sympathy of their friends, as much as any of the sons or daughters of affliction. Especially, 2. To see their own prince thus wronged, who had been so great a blessing to their land, and had not done any thing to forfeit the affections of his people; to see him in this distress, and themselves unable to help him, might well draw floods of tears from their eyes.

24. ¶ And lo, Zadok also, and all the Levites were with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God, and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city. 25. And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation. 26. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee: behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him. 27. The king said also unto Zadok the priest, Art not thou a seer? return into the city in peace, and your two sons with you, Ahimaaz thy son, and Jonathan the son of Abiathar. 28. See, I will tarry in the plain of the wilderness, until there come word from you to certify me. 29. Zadok therefore and Abiathar carried the ark of God again to Jerusalem; and they tarried there. 30. ¶ And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot; and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up weeping as they went up.

Here is, 1. The fidelity of the priests and Levites, and their firm adherence to David and his interest. They knew David's great affection to them and their office; notwithstanding his failings; the method Absalom took to gain people's affections made no impression upon them; he had little religion in him, and therefore they steadily stuck to David; Zadok and Abiathar, and all the Levites, if he go, will accompany him, and take the ark with them, that by it they might ask counsel of God for him, *ver.* 24. Note, They that are friends to the ark in their prosperity, shall find it a friend to them in their adversity. Formerly David would not rest, till he had found a resting place for the ark, and now, if the priests may have their mind, the ark shall not rest till David returns to his rest.

2. David's dismissal of them back into the city, *ver.* 25, 26. Abiathar was high-priest, 1 *Kings* ii. 35. but Zadok was his assistant, and attended the ark most closely, while Abiathar was active in public business, *ver.* 24. Therefore David directs his speech to Zadok, and an excellent speech it is, and shews him to be in a very good frame under his affliction, and that still he holds fast his integrity.

(1.) He is very solicitous for the safety of the ark; by all means, carry that back into the city, let not that be unsettled and exposed with me, lodge that again in the tent pitched for it; sure Absalom, as bad as he is, will do that no harm. David's heart, like Eli's, trembles for the ark of God. Note, It argues a good principle to be more concerned for the church's prosperity, than for our own, to prefer Jerusalem before our chief joy, *Psalms* cxxxvii. 6. the success of the gospel, and the flourishing of the church, above our own wealth, credit, ease and safety, even when they are most in hazard.

(2.) He is very desirous to return to the enjoyment of the privileges of God's house. He will reckon it the greatest instance of God's favour to him, if he may but once more be brought back to see it, and his habitation, this will be more his joy, than to be brought back to his own palace and

and throne again. Note, Gracious souls measure their comforts and conveniences in this world, by the opportunity they give them of communion with God. Hezekiah wishes for the recovery of his health for this reason, that he might go up to the house of the Lord, Isa. xxxviii. 22.

(3.) He is very submissive to the holy will of God, concerning the issue of his present dark dispensation. He hopes the best, ver. 25. and hopes for it from the favour of God, which he looks upon to be the fountain of all good, if God favour me so far, I shall be settled again as formerly: but he provides for the worse. If he deny me this favour, if he thus say, *I have no delight in thee*, I know I deserve the continuance of his displeasure, his holy will be done: see him here waiting to receive the event: *Behold here am I*, as a servant expecting orders; and see him willing to refer himself to God concerning it, *let him do to me as seemeth good to him*, I have nothing to object, all is well that God doth. Observe with what satisfaction and holy complacency he speaks of the divine disposal: not only he can do what he will, subscribing to his power, Job ix. 12. or he may do what he will, subscribing to his sovereignty, Job xxiii. 13. or he may do what he will, subscribing to his unchangeableness, Job xxiii. 13—15. but *let him do what he will*, subscribing to his wisdom and goodness. Note, It is our interest, as well as duty, cheerfully to acquiesce in the will of God, whatever befalls us. That we may not complain of what is, let us see God's hand in all events; and that we may not be afraid of what shall be, let us see all events in God's hand.

3. The confidence David put in the priests, to serve his interest to the utmost of their power, in his absence. He calls Zadok a seer, ver. 27. *i. e.* a wise man, a man that can see into business, and discern time and judgment; thou hast thy eyes in thy hand, Eccl. ii. 14. and therefore art capable of doing me service, especially, by sending me intelligence of the enemies motions and resolutions. One friend that is a seer, in such an exigence as this, was worth twenty that were not so quick sighted. For the settling of a private correspondence with the priests in his absence, he appoints, 1. Whom they should send to him, their two sons Ahimaaz and Jonathan, whose coat, it might be hoped, would be their protection, and of whose prudence and faithfulness probably he had had experience. 2. Whither they should send. He would encamp in the plain of the wilderness till he heard from them, ver. 28. and then would move according to the information and advice they should send him. Hereupon they returned to the city to wait the event: it was pity any disturbance should be given to a state so happy as this was, when the prince and the priests had such an entire affection for, and confidence in, each other.

4. The melancholy posture that David and his men put themselves into, when, in the beginning of their march, they went up the mount of Olives, ver. 30. 1. David himself, as a deep mourner, covered his head and face for shame, and blushing, went barefoot, as a prisoner or a slave, and for mortification; and went weeping. Did it become a man of his reputation, for courage and greatness of spirit, thus to cry like a child, only for fear of an enemy at a distance, against whom he might easily have made head, and perhaps, with one bold stroke have routed him? Yes, it did not ill become him, considering how much there was in this trouble: (1.) Of the unkindness of his son. He could not but weep, to think that one who came out of his bowels, and had so often lain in his arms, should thus lift up the heel against him. God himself is said to be grieved with the rebellions of his own children, Psalm xcv. 10. and even broken with their whorish heart, Ezek. vi. 9. (2.) There was much of the displeasure of his God in it; this infused the wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery, Lam. iii. 19. His sin was ever before him, Psalm li. 3. but never so plain, nor ever appearing so black as now. He never wept thus when Saul hunted him, but a wounded conscience makes troubles lie heavy, Psalm xxxviii. 4. 2. When David wept, all his company wept likewise, being much affected with his grief, and willing to share in it. It is our duty to weep with those that weep, especially our superiors, and those that are better than we; for, *if this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* We must weep with those that weep for sin. When Hezekiah humbled himself for his sin, all Jerusalem joined with him, 2 Chron. xxxii. 26. To prevent suffering with sinners, let us sorrow with them.

31. ¶ And one told David, saying, Ahithophel is among the conspirators with Absalom. And David said, O LORD, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness. 32. ¶ And it came to pass, that when David was come to the top of the mount, where he worshipped God, behold, Hushai the Archite came to meet him, with his coat rent and earth upon his head: 33. Unto whom David said, If thou passest on with me, then thou shalt be a burden unto me. 34. But if thou return to the city, and say unto Absalom, I will be thy servant, O king, as I have been thy father's servant hitherto, so will I now also be thy servant: then mayest thou for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. 35. And hast thou not there with thee Zadok and Abiathar the priests? therefore it shall be, that what thing soever thou shalt hear out of the king's house, thou shalt tell it to Zadok and Abiathar the priests. 36. Behold, they have there with them their two sons, Ahimaaz Zadok's son, and Jonathan Abiathar's son: and by them ye shall send unto me every thing that ye can hear. 37. So Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem.

Nothing, it seems, appeared to David more threatening in Absalom's plot, than that Ahithophel was in it, for one good head, in such a design, is worth a thousand good hands. Absalom was himself no politician, but he had got one entirely in his interest that was, and would be the more dangerous, because he had been all along acquainted with David's counsels and affairs; if therefore he can be baffled, Absalom is as good as routed, and the head of the conspiracy cut off. This David endeavours to do,

1. By prayer. When he heard that Ahithophel was in the plot, he lift up his heart to God in this short prayer. *Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness*, ver. 31. He had not opportunity for a long prayer, but he was none of those that thought he should be heard for his much speaking. It was a fervent prayer, *Lord, I pray thee*, do this. God is well pleased with the importunity of those that come to him with their petitions. He was particular in this prayer; names the person whose counsels he prays against. God gives us leave in prayer to be humbly and reverently free with him, and to mention the particular care, and fear, and

grief, that lies heavy upon us. He prays not against Ahithophel's person, but against his counsel, that God would turn it into foolishness; that, though he was a wise man, he might at this time, give foolish counsel; or, if he gave wise counsel, that it might be rejected as foolish; or, if it were followed, that by some providence or other it might be defeated, and not attain the end. David prayed this with a firm belief that God has all hearts in his hand, and tongues too; that, when he pleaseth, he can take away the understanding of the aged, and make the judges fools. Job xii. 17. Isa. iii. 2, 5. and in hope that God would own and plead his just and injured cause. Note, We may pray in faith, and should pray with fervency, that God will turn that counsel into foolishness, which is taken against his people.

2. By policy. We must second our prayer with our endeavours, else we tempt God. It is good service to countermin the politics of the church's enemies. When David came to the top of the mount, he worshipped God, ver. 32. Note, Weeping must not hinder worshipping, but quicken it rather. Now he penned the third Psalm, as appears by the title, and some think his singing it was the worship he now paid to God. Just now providence brought Hushai to him; while he was yet speaking God heard, and sent him that person who should be instrumental to befool Ahithophel. He came to condole David's present trouble with his coat rent, and earth upon his head; but David, having a great deal of confidence in his conduct and faithfulness, resolved to employ him in the nature of a spy upon Absalom: he would not take him with him, ver. 33. for he had now more need of soldiers than counsellors, but sent him back to Jerusalem to wait for Absalom's arrival, as a deserter from David, and to offer him his service, ver. 34. Thus he might insinuate himself into his counsels, and defeat Ahithophel, either by dissuading Absalom from following his advice, or by discovering it to David, that he might know where to stand upon his guard. How this gross dissimulation, which David put Hushai upon, can be justified as a stratagem in war, I do not see. The best that can be made of it is, that Absalom, if he rebel against his father, must stand upon his guard against all mankind; and if he will be deceived, let him be deceived. David recommends him to Zadok and Abiathar, as persons proper to be consulted with, ver. 35. and to their two sons, as trusty men to be sent on errands to David, ver. 36. And Hushai, thus instructed, came to Jerusalem, ver. 37. whither also Absalom soon after came with his forces. How soon do royal palaces and royal cities change their masters! But we look for a kingdom which cannot be thus shaken, and in the possession of which we cannot be disturbed.

C H A P. XVI.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we left David flying from Jerusalem, and Absalom entering into it; in this chapter, 1. We are to follow David in his melancholy flight, and there we find him, (1.) Cheated by Ziba, ver. 1—4. (2.) Curbed by Shimei, which he bears with wonderful patience, ver. 5—14. 2. We are to meet Absalom in his triumphant entry; and there we find him, (1.) Cheated by Hushai, ver. 15—19. (2.) Counselling by Ahithophel to go in unto his father's concubines, ver. 20—23.

1. AND when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer-fruits, and a bottle of wine. 2. And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these? And Ziba said, The asses be for the king's household to ride on, and the bread and summer-fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink. 3. And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, behold he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To-day shall the house of Israel restore me to the kingdom of my father. 4. Then said the king to Ziba, Behold thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth. And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight, my lord, O king.

We read before how kind David was to Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, how he prudently intrusted his servant Ziba with the management of his estate, while he generously entertained him at his own table, chap. ix. 10. This matter was well settled; but it seems Ziba is not content to be manager, he longs to be master of Mephibosheth's estate. Now he thinks it his time to make himself so; if he can procure a grant of it from the crown, he hopes, whether David or Absalom get the better, it is all one to him, he shall secure his prey, which he promiseth himself by fishing in troubled waters. In order hereunto,

1. He makes David a handsome present of provisions, which was the more welcome, because it came seasonably, ver. 1. and with this he designed to incline him to himself, for *a man's gift maketh room for him, and bringing him before great men*, Prov. xviii. 16. Nay, *Whithersoever it turneth it prospereth*, Prov. xvii. 8. David inferred from this, that Ziba was a very discreet and generous man, and well affected to him, when in all he designed nothing but to serve his own markets, and to get Mephibosheth's estate settled upon him. Shall the prospect of advantage in this world make men generous to the rich, and shall not the believing of an abundant recompence in the resurrection of the just make us charitable to the poor? Luke xiv. 14. Ziba was very considerate in the present he brought to David, it was what would do him some good in his present distress, ver. 2. Observe, the wine is intended for those that were faint, not for the king's own drinking, or the courtiers, it seems they did not commonly use it, but it was for cordials, for them that were ready to perish, Prov. xxxi. 6. Blessed art thou, O land, when thy princes use wine for strength, as David did, and not for drunkenness, as Absalom did, chap. xiii. 28. See Eccl. x. 17. Whatever Ziba intended in this present, God's providence sent it in to David for his support very graciously. God makes use of bad men for good purposes to his people, and sends them meat by ravens.

2. Having by his present insinuated himself into David's affection, and gained credit with him, the next thing he hath to do for the compassing of his end, is to incense him against Mephibosheth, which he doth by a false accusation, representing him as ungratefully designing to raise himself by the

the present broils, and to recover the crown to his own head, now David and his son were contending for it. David enquires for him as one of the family, which gives Ziba occasion to tell this false story of him, *ver. 3*. What a great deal of damage do masters many times sustain by the lying tongues of their servants? David knew Mephibosheth not to be an ambitious man, but easy in his place; and well affected to him and his government; nor could he be so weak as to expect with his lame legs to climb the ladder of preferment; yet he gives credit to the calumny, and without farther enquiry or consideration convicts Mephibosheth of treason, seizeth his land as forfeited, and grants them to Ziba; *Behold, thine are all that pertaineth to Mephibosheth, ver. 4*. a rash judgment, and which afterwards he was ashamed of, when the truth came to light, *chap. xix. 29*. Princes cannot help it, but they will be sometimes (as our law speaks) deceived in their grants; but they ought to use all means possible to discover the truth, and to guard against malicious designing men, who would impose upon them as Ziba did upon David, who having by his wiles gained his point, laughed in his sleeve at the king's great easiness, hugged himself in his own success, and parted with a mighty compliment upon the king, that he valued his favour more than Mephibosheth's estate, let me find grace in thy sight, O king, and I have enough. Great men ought always to be jealous of flatterers, and remember that nature has given them two ears, that they may hear both sides.

5. ¶ And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, who name was Shimei the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. 6. And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people, and all the mighty men were on his right hand, and on his left. 7. And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial. 8. The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whole stead thou hast reigned, and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and behold thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man. 9. ¶ Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. 10. And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? 11. And David said unto Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now may this Benjamite do it? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. 12. It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite me good for his cursing this day. 13. And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust. 14. And the king, and all the people that were with him, came weary, and refreshed themselves there.

We find here how David bore Shimei's curses much better than he had bore Ziba's flatteries: by those he was brought to pass a wrong judgment upon another, by these to pass a right judgment on himself; the world's smiles are more dangerous than its frowns. Observe here,

1. How insolent and furious Shimei was, and how his malice took occasion from David's present distress to be so much the more outrageous. David in his flight was come to Bahurim a city of Benjamin, in or near which this Shimei lived, who being of the house of Saul (with the fall of which all his hopes of preferment fell) had an implacable enmity to David, unjustly looking upon him as the ruin of Saul and his family, only because by the divine appointment he succeeded it. While David was in prosperity and power, Shimei hated him as much as he did now, but durst not then say any thing against him. God knows what is in the hearts of those that are disaffected to him and his government, earthly princes do not; but now he came forth and cursed David with all the ill words and ill wishes he could invent, *ver. 5*. He took this opportunity to give vent to his malice. 1. Because now he thought he might do it safely, yet if David had now given the provocation its just resentment, it had cost him his life. 2. Because now it would be most grievous to David, would add affliction to his grief, and pour vinegar into his wounds. He complains of them as most barbarous, who talk to the grief of those whom God has wounded, Psalm lxxix. 25. so Shimei did, loading him with curses, whom no generous eye could look upon without compassion. 3. Because now he thought providence justified his reproaches, and his present afflictions proved him to be as ill a man as he was willing to represent him. Job's friends condemned him upon this false principle. They that are under the rebukes of a gracious God, must not think it strange if those bring upon them the reproaches of evil men. If once it be said, *God hath forsaken him*, presently it follows, *persecute and take him*, Psalm lxxi. 11. But it is the character of a base spirit thus to trample upon those that are down, and insult over them.

See, 1. What this wretched fellow did: *He casts stones at David, ver. 6*. as if his king had been a dog, or the worst of criminals, whom all Israel must stone with stones till he die. Perhaps he kept at such a distance, that the stones he threw could not reach David, nor any of his attendants, yet he shewed what he would have done if it had been in his power. *He cast dust, ver. 13*. which probably would blow into his own eyes, like the curses he threw, which, being causeless, would return upon his own head. Thus, while his malice made him odious, the impotency of it made him ridiculous and contemptible. They that fight against God, though they hate him, they cannot hurt him. *If thou sleepest, what dost thou against him?* Job xxxv. 6. It was an aggravation of his wickedness, that David was attended with his mighty men on his right hand and on his left, so that he was not in so forlorn a condition as he thought; *persecuted but not forsaken*: and that he continued to do it, and did it the more passionately, for David's bearing it patiently.

No. XLIX.

2. What he said. With the stones he shot his arrows, even bitter words, *ver. 7, 8*. in contempt of that law, *Thou shalt not curse the gods*, Exod. xxii. 28. David was a man of honour and conscience, and great reputation for every thing that is just and good; what could this foul mouth say against him? Why truly, what was done long since to the house of Saul, is the only thing that sticks upon his stomach, and with which he upbraids him, because that was the thing that he himself was a loser by. See how apt we are to judge of men and their character, by what they are to us; and conclude that those are certainly evil men, that have never so justly been, or that we never so unjustly think have been, instruments of evil to us. So partial are we to ourselves, that no rule can be more fallacious than this. No man could be more innocent of the blood of the house of Saul than David was; once and again he spared Saul's life, while he fought him. When Saul and his sons were slain by the Philistines, David and his men were many miles off; and when they heard it lamented it. From the murder of Abner and Ish-bosheth, he had sufficiently cleared himself; and yet all the blood of the house of Saul must be laid at his door; innocence is no fence against malice and falsehood; nor are we to think it strange if we be charged with that which we have been most careful to keep ourselves from. It is well for us that men are not to be our judges, but he whose judgment is according to truth.

The blood of the house of Saul is here most unjustly charged upon him, 1. As that which gave him his character, and denominated him a bloody man, and a man of Belial, *ver. 7*. And if a man of blood no doubt a man of Belial, *2. c.* A child of the devil, (who is called Belial, *2 Cor. vi. 15.*) and who was a murderer from the beginning. Bloody men are the worst of men. 2. As that which brought the present trouble upon him; now thou art dethroned and driven out to the wilderness, *the Lord has returned upon thee the blood of the house of Saul*. See how forward malicious men are to press God's judgments into the service of their own passion and revenge. If any they think has wronged them come into trouble, that must be made the cause of the trouble: But we must take heed, lest we wrong God by making his providence thus to patronize our foolish and unjust resentments. As the wrath of man works not the righteousness of God, so the righteousness of God serveth not the wrath of man. 3. As that which would now be his utter ruin, for he endeavours to make him despair of ever recovering his throne again, (now they said, *there is no help for him in God*, Psalm vi. 2) *the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom* (not Mephibosheth, the house of Saul never dreamed of making him king, as Ziba suggested) *and thou art taken in thy mischief*, i. e. the mischief that will be thy destruction, and all because thou art a bloody man. Thus Shimei cursed.

2. See how patient and submissive David was under this abuse. The sons of Zeruiah. Abishai particularly, were forward to maintain David's honour with their swords; they resent the affront heinously, as well they might; *why should this dead dog be suffered to curse the king?* *ver. 9*. If David will but give them leave, they will put these lying cursing lips to silence, and take off his head, for his throwing stones at the king was an overt act, which abundantly proved that he compassed and imagined his death. But the king would by no means suffer it, *What have I to do with you? so let him curse*. Thus Christ rebuked his disciples, who in zeal for his honour would have fire from heaven on the town that affronted him, *Luke ix. 55*. Let us see with what consideration David quieted himself.

1. The chief thing that silenced him was, that he had deserved it; this is not mentioned indeed; for a man may truly repent, and yet needs not upon all occasions proclaim his penitent reflections. Shimei unjustly upbraided him with the blood of Saul, from that his conscience acquitted him, but at the same time charged him with the blood of Uriah; the reproach is too true (think David) though false as he means it. Note, A humble tender spirit will turn reproaches into reproofs, and so get good by them, instead of being provoked by them.

2. He observes the hand of God in it; *The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David, ver. 10*. and again, *so let him curse, for the Lord has bidden him, ver. 11*. As it was Shimei's sin, it was not from God, but from the devil, and his own wicked heart, nor did God's hand in it excuse or extenuate it, much less justify it, no more than it did their sin who put Christ to death, *Acts ii. 23-24*. But as it was David's affliction, it was from the Lord, one of the evils which he raised up against him. David looked above the instrument of his trouble to the supreme director, as Job, when the rapparees had plundered him, acknowledges *the Lord has taken away*. Nothing more proper to quiet a gracious soul under affliction, than an eye to the hand of God in it: *I opened not my mouth because thou didst it*. The scourge of the tongue is God's rod.

3. He quieted himself under the lesser affliction, with the consideration of the greater, *ver. 11*. *My son seeks my life, much more may this Benjamite*. Note, Tribulation works patience in those that are sanctified. The more we bear, the better able we should be to bear still more; what tries our patience should improve it. The more we are injured to trouble, the less we are injurious, when even friends are unkind; nor that friends are unkind, when even children are undutiful.

4. He comforts himself with hopes that God would some way or other bring good to him out of his affliction, would balance the trouble itself, and recompence his patience under it. *The Lord will requite me good for his cursing*. If God bid Shimei grieve me; it is, that he himself may the more sensibly comfort me; sure he has mercy in store for me, which he is preparing me for by this trial. We may depend upon God as our pay-master, not only for our services, but for our sufferings. *Let them curse, but bless thou*. David at length is housed at Bahurim, *ver. 14*. where he meets with refreshment, and is hid from the strife of tongues.

15. ¶ And Absalom and all the people, the men of Israel, came to Jerusalem, and Ahithophel with him. 16. And it came to pass when Hushai the Archite, David's friend, was come unto Absalom, that Hushai said unto Absalom, God save the king, God save the king. 17. And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? why wentest thou not with thy friend? 18. And Hushai said unto Absalom, Nay but whom the LORD and this people, and all the men of Israel choose, his will I be, and with him will I abide. 19. And again, whom should I serve? should I not serve in the presence of his son? as I have served in thy father's presence, so I will be in thy presence. 20. ¶ Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do. 21. And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house, and all Israel shall hear that

that thou art abhorred of thy father, then shall the hands of all that *are* with thee be strong. 22. So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house, and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines, in the sight of all Israel. 23. And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, *was* as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so *was* all the counsel of Ahithophel, both with David and with Absalom.

Absalom had notice sent him presently by some of his friends at Jerusalem, that David was withdrawn, and in what posture, with what a small retinue he was gone; so that as the coasts were clear, Absalom might take possession of Jerusalem when he pleased; The gates were open, and there were none to oppose him: Accordingly he came without delay, ver. 15. extremely elevated, no doubt, with this success at first, and that in which when he formed his design, probably, he apprehended the greatest difficulty, was so easily and effectually done: Now he is master of Jerusalem he concludes all his own, the country will follow of course. God suffers wicked men to prosper a while in their wicked plots, even beyond their expectation, that their disappointment may be the more grievous and disgraceful.

The most celebrated politicians of that age, were Ahithophel and Hushai, the former Absalom brings with him to Jerusalem, ver. 15. the other meets him there, ver. 16. so that he cannot but think himself sure of success, when he has both these to be his counsellors; on them he relies, and consults not the ark, though he had that with him. But miserable counsellors were they both; for,

1. Hushai would never counsel him to do wisely, he was really his enemy, and designed to betray him; while he pretended to be in his interest; so that he could not have a more dangerous man about him. 1. Hushai complimented him upon his accession to the throne, as if he was abundantly satisfied in his title, and well pleased that he was come to the possession, ver. 16. What arts of dissimulation are those tempted to use, who govern themselves by fleshly wisdom, and how happy are they, who have not known the depths of Satan, but have their conversation in the world with simplicity, and godly sincerity! 2. Absalom was surprized to find him for him, who was known to be David's intimate friend and confidant: He asks him *Is this thy kindness to thy friend?* ver. 17. pleasing himself with this thought that all would be his since Hushai was: He doubts not of his sincerity, but easily believes what he gladly would have, that David's best friends were so in love with him, as to take the first opportunity to declare for him, *Though the pride of his heart deceived him*, Obad. 3. 3. Hushai still makes him believe he is hearty for him. For though David is his friend, yet he is for the king in possession, ver. 18. whom the people choose, and providence smiles upon, he will be faithful to; and he is for the king in succession, ver. 19. the rising sun. It was true, he loved his father but he had had his day, and it was over, and why should he not love his successor as well? Thus he pretends to give reasons for a resolution he abhorred the thought of.

2. Ahithophel did counsel him to do wickedly, and so did as effectually betray him, as he did that was designedly false to him: For they that advise men to sin, certainly advise them to their hurt; and that government which is founded in sin is founded in the sand. It seems Ahithophel was noted for a deep politician, his counsel was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God, ver. 23. such reputation was he in for subtlety and sagacity in public affairs, such reaches had he beyond other privy counsellors, such reasons would he give for his advice, and such success generally his projects had, that all people, good and bad, both David and Absalom, had a mighty regard to his sentiments, too much by far, when they regarded him as an oracle of God; shall the prudence of any mortal compare with him who is only wise? Let us observe how this account of Ahithophel's fame for policy, 1. That many excel in worldly wisdom, who are utterly destitute of heavenly grace, because those, who set up for oracles themselves, are apt to despise the oracles of God. *God has chosen the foolish things of the world;* and the greatest statesmen are seldom the greatest saints. 2. That many times the great politicians act most foolishly for themselves; Ahithophel is cried up for an oracle, and yet very unwisely takes part with Absalom, who was not only an usurper, but a flatter-brained young fellow, never like to come to good; whose fall, and the fall of all that adhered to him, any one with the tenth part of the policy that Ahithophel pretended to, might foresee. Well, after all, honesty is the best policy, and will be found so at long run.

Observe, 1. The wicked counsel Ahithophel gave to Absalom: finding that David had left his concubines to keep the house, he adviseth him to *lie with them*, ver. 21. a very wicked thing, the divine law had made it a capital crime, Lev. xx. 11. The apostle speaks of it as a piece of villainy *not so much as named among the gentiles*, 1 Cor. v. 1. Reuben lost his birth-right for it. But Ahithophel advised to it as a politic thing, because it would give assurance to all Israel, 1. That he was in good earnest in his pretensions; no doubt he resolved to make himself master of all that belonged to his predecessor, when he began with his concubines. 2. That he was resolved never to make peace with his father upon any terms, for by this he would render himself so odious to his father, that he would never be reconciled to him, which perhaps the people were jealous of, and that they must be sacrificed to the reconciliation. Having drawn the sword, he did by this provocation throw away the scabbard, which would strengthen the hands of his party, and keep them tight to him. This was his cursed policy, which spake him rather *an oracle of the devil than of God*.

2. Absalom's compliance with this counsel. It suited his lewd and wicked genius well enough, and he delayed not to put it into execution, ver. 22. When an unnatural rebellion was the opera, what fitter prologue could there be to it than such unnatural lust? Thus was his wickedness all of a piece, and such as a conscience not quite feared could not entertain the thoughts of without the utmost horror. Nay, The client outdoes what his counsel advises: Ahithophel bid him do it, that all Israel might hear of it; but as if that were not enough, so perfectly lost is he to all honour and virtue, he will do it, and all Israel shall see it. A tent is accordingly spread on the top of the house for the purpose; so impudently did he declare his sin as Sodom. Yet in this, the word of God was fulfilled in the letter of it; God had threatened, by Nathan, that for his defiling Bath-sheba, he should have his own wives publicly debauched, chap. xii. 11, 12. and some think Ahithophel in advising it, designed to be revenged on David for the injury done to Bath-sheba, who was his grand-daughter; for she was the daughter of Eliam, chap. xi. 3. who was the son of Ahithophel, chap. xxiii. 34. Job speaks of it as the just punishment of adultery, chap. xxxi. 9, 10. *let my wife grind to another*, and the prophet Hof. iv. 13, 14. What to think of these concubines, who submitted to this wickedness, I know not, but how unrighteous soever Absalom and they are, we must say the Lord is righteous: nor shall any word of his fall to the ground.

C H A P. XVII.

The contest between David and Absalom is now hastening towards a crisis: It must be determined by the sword, and for that preparation is made in this chapter. 1. Absalom calls a council of war, in which Ahithophel advises him to dispatch, ver. 1—4. but Hushai advises him to deliberation, ver. 5—13. and Hushai's counsel is agreed to, ver. 14. for vexation at which Ahithophel hangs himself, ver. 23. 2. Secret intelligence is sent to David (but with much difficulty) of their proceedings, ver. 15—21. 3. David marches to the other side Jordan, ver. 22—24. and there his camp is victualled by some of his friends in that country, ver. 27—29. 4. Absalom and his forces march after him into the land of Gilead on the other side Jordan, ver. 25, 26. there we shall in the next chapter find the cause decided by a battle: hitherto every thing has looked black upon poor David, but now the day of his deliverance begins to dawn.

1. **M**OREOVER, Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night. 2. And I will come upon him while he is weary and weak-handed, and will make him afraid; and all the people that *are* with him shall flee, and I will smite the king only. 3. And I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest, is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace. 4. And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel. 5. Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith. 6. And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do *after* his saying? If not, speak thou. 7. And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time. 8. For (said Hushai) thou knowest thy father and his men, that they *be* mighty men, and they *be* chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people. 9. Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some *other* place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it, will say, there is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom. 10. And he also, *that is* valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and *they* which *be* with him *are* valiant men. 11. Therefore I counsel, that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude, and that thou go to battle in thine own person. 12. So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him, and of all the men that *are* with him, there shall not be left so much as one. 13. Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river until there be not one small stone found there. 14. And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel, for the LORD had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom.

Absalom is in peaceable possession of Jerusalem, the palace royal is his own, and the thrones of judgment, even the thrones of the house of David; his good father reigned in Hebron, and only over the tribe of Judah above seven years, and was not hasty to destroy his rival, his government was built upon a divine promise, which he was sure of the performance of in due time, and therefore waited patiently in the mean time: But the young man, Absalom, not only hastens from Hebron to Jerusalem, but there is impatient till he has destroyed his father; cannot be content with his throne till he has his life; for his government is founded in iniquity, and therefore feels itself tottering, and thinks itself obliged to do every thing with violence. That so profligate a wretch as Absalom should aim at the throne of so good a father, is not so strange; there are here and there monsters in nature; but that the body of the people of Israel, to whom David had been so great a blessing in all respects, should join with him in it, is very amazing. But their fathers oft mutinied against Moses. The best of parents, and the best of princes, will not think it strange, if they be made uneasy by those who should be their support and joy, when they consider what sons and what subjects David himself had.

David, and all that adhered to him, must be cut off. That is resolved, for aught appears, *namque contradicente*. None dares mention his personal merits and great services done to his country, in opposition to this resolve, nor so much as ask why, *what evil has he done* to forfeit his crown, much less his head? None dares propose that his banishment suffice for the present, or that agents be sent to treat with him to resign the crown, which, having so tamely quitted the city, they might think he would easily be persuaded to do: It was not long since Absalom himself fled for a crime, and David contented himself with his being an exile, though he deserved death, nay he mourned and longed for him; but so perfectly void of all natural affection is this ungrateful Absalom, that he perfectly thirsts after his own father's blood: It is past dispute, David must be destroyed, all the question is, how it may be done.

1. Ahithophel adviseth that he be pursued immediately this very night, with

with a flying army, which he himself undertakes the command of; that the king only be smitten, and his forces dispersed, and then the people that were now for him, would fall in with Absalom of course, and there would not be such a long war as had been between the house of Saul and David, *ver. 1, 2, 3. The man whom thou seekest is as if all returned.* By this it appears, Absalom had declared his design to be upon David's life, and Ahithophel concurs with him in it: *Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered,* and be an easy prey to the wolf. Thus he contrives to include the war in a little compass, by fighting neither with small nor great, but the king of Israel only, and to conclude it in a little time, by falling upon him presently. Nothing could have been more fatal to David, than the taking of these measures. It was too true, that he was weary and weak-handed; that a little thing would make him afraid, else he had not out-run his house upon the first alarm of Absalom's rebellion; it was probable enough that upon a fierce attack, especially in the night, the small force he had would be put into confusion and disorder, and it would be an easy thing to *smite the king only*, and then the business was done, the whole nation would be reduced of course, and *all the people*, saith he, *shall be in peace.* See how a general ruin is called by usurpers a general peace: but thus the devil's palace is in peace, while he, as a strong man armed, keeps it. Compare with this the plot of Caiaphas (that second Ahithophel) against the Son of David, to crush his interest by destroying them, let that *one man die for the people*, John xi. 50. *Kill the heir, and the inheritance shall be ours*, Matt. xxi. 38. But the counsel of them both was turned into foolishness. Yet the children of light may in their generation learn wisdom from the children of this world. What our hand finds to do, let us do it quickly, and with all our might. It is prudence to be vigorous and expeditious, and not lose our time, particularly in our spiritual warfare. If Satan flee from us, let us follow our blow.

They that have quarreled with crowned heads, have generally observed the decorum only of quarrelling against their evil counsellors, and calling them to an account, *the king himself can do no wrong*, it is they that do it; but Absalom's bare-faced villainy strikes at the king directly, nay, at the king only; for would you think it? this saying, *I will smite the king only*, pleased Absalom well, *ver. 4.* nor had he so much sense of honour and virtue left him, as to take on him to startle at it; or even to pretend reluctance in this barbarous and monstrous resolution. What good can stand before the heat of a furious ambition?

2. Hushai adviseth that they be not too hasty in pursuing David, but take time to draw up all their force against him, and to overpower him with numbers, as Ahithophel had advised to take him by surprise. Now Hushai in giving this counsel really intended to serve David and his interest: that he might have time to send him notice of his proceedings, and that David might gain time to gather an army, and to remove into those countries beyond Jordan, which lying more remote, Absalom probably had got least interest in. Nothing would be of greater advantage to David in this juncture, than time to turn him in; that he may have that, Hushai counsels Absalom to do nothing rashly, but to proceed with caution, and secure his success, by securing his strength.

Now, 1. Absalom gave Hushai a fair invitation to advise him. All the elders of Israel approved of Ahithophel's counsel, yet God over-ruled the heart of Absalom not to proceed upon it, till he had advised with Hushai, *ver. 5. let us hear what he saith.* Herein he thought he did wisely, two heads are better than one, but God taketh the wife in their own craftiness. See Mr. Pool's note on this.

2. Hushai gave good reasons for what he said.

1. He argued against Ahithophel's counsel, and undertook to shew the danger of following his advice. It is with modesty and all possible deference to his settled reputation that he begs leave to differ from him, *ver. 7.* The counsel of Ahithophel always used to be the best, and such as may be relied on, but with submission to that noble peer, he is of opinion, that his counsel is not good at this time, for it was by no means safe to venture so great a cause as that in which they were now engaged, upon so small a number, and such a hasty ally as Ahithophel advised; remembering the defeat of Israel before Ai, *Josh. vi. 4.* It has often proved of ill consequence to despise an enemy. See how plausibly Hushai reasons: He insists much upon it that David was a great soldier, a man of great conduct, courage, and experience; all knew and owned this, even Absalom himself, *thy father is a man of war*, *ver. 8. a mighty man*, *ver. 10.* and not to weary and weak-handed as Ahithophel imagines. His retiring from Jerusalem must be imputed not to his cowardice but his prudence. 2. His attendants, though few, were mighty men, *ver. 8. valiant men*, *ver. 10.* men of celebrated bravery and versed in all the arts of war: Ahithophel, who perhaps had worn the gown more than the sword, would find himself an unequal match for them, *One of them would chase a thousand.* 3. They were all exasperated against Absalom, who was the author of all this mischief, were chafed in their minds, and would fight with the utmost fury: so that, what with their courage, and what with their rage, there would be no standing before them, especially for such fresh-water soldiers as Absalom's generally were. Thus doth he represent them as formidable, as Ahithophel had made them despicable. 4. He suggests it probable, that David and some of his choice men would lie in ambush, in some pit, or other close place, and fall upon Absalom's soldiers before they were aware, the terror of which would put them to flight; and the defeat, though but of a small party, would dispirit all the rest, especially their own consciences at the same time, accusing them of treason, against one that they were sure was not only God's anointed, but *a man after his own heart*, *ver. 9.* It will soon be given out, that there is a slaughter among Absalom's men, and then they will all make the best of their way, and the heart of Ahithophel himself, though now it seems like the heart of a lion, will utterly melt. In short, he will not find it so easy a matter to deal with David and his men as he thinks it is, and if he failed we are all routed.

2. He offered his own advice and gave his reasons; and

1. He counselled that which he knew would gratify Absalom's proud vain-glorious humour, though it would not be really service to his interest. (1.) He adviseth that all Israel should be gathered together, *i. e.* the militia of all the tribes; his taking it for granted they were all for him, and giving him an opportunity to see them altogether under his command, would gratify him as much as any thing. (2.) He adviseth that Absalom go to battle in his own person, as if he looked upon him to be a better soldier than Ahithophel, more fit to give command, and have the honour of the victory, insinuating that Ahithophel had put a slight upon him, in offering to go without him; see how easy it is to betray proud men, by applauding them, and feeding their pride.

2. He counselled that which seemed to secure the success at last infallibly, without running any hazard: For if they could raise such vast numbers as they promised themselves, wherever they found him they should not fail to crush him: If in the field they should fall upon him, as the dew that covers the face of the ground, and cut off all his men with him, *ver. 12.* Perhaps, Absalom was better pleased with the design of cutting off all the men that were with him, having a particular antipathy to some of David's

friends, than with Ahithophel's project of smiting the king only. Thus Hushai gained his point by humouring his revenge, as well as his pride. 2. If in a city they should not fear conquering him, for they should have hands enow, if occasion were, to draw the city itself into its river with ropes, *ver. 13.* This odd contrivance how impracticable soever, being new, served for an amusement, and recommended itself by pleasing the fancy, for they would all smile at the humour of it.

By all these arts. Hushai gained not only Absalom's approbation of the advice, but the unanimous concurrence of this great council of war; they all agreed, the counsel of Hushai is better than the counsel of Ahithophel, *ver. 14.* See here, 1. How much the policy of man can do; if Hushai had not been there, Ahithophel's counsel had certainly prevailed: and, though never so many had given their opinion, nothing could be really more for Absalom's interest than that which he advised, and yet, Hushai, with his management, brings them all over to his side; and none of them are aware, that he saith all this in favour of David and his interest, but all say as he saith. See how the unthinking part are imposed upon by the designing part of mankind, what tools, what fools great men make of one another by their intrigues, and what tricks there are often in courts and councils, which they are happiest that are least conversant with. 2. See how much more the providence of God can do; Hushai humoured the thing well enough, yet the success is ascribed to God, and his agency on the minds of those concerned. *The Lord had appointed to defeat the good counsel of Ahithophel.* Be it observed to the comfort of all that fear God, he turns all men's hearts as the rivers of waters, though they know not the thoughts of the Lord. He stands in the congregation of the mighty, has an over-ruling hand in all counsels, and a negative voice in all resolves, and laughs at men's projects against his anointed.

15. Then said Hushai unto Zadok, and to Abiathar the priests, Thus and thus did Ahithophel counsel Absalom and the elders of Israel; and thus and thus have I counselled. 16. Now therefore send quickly, and tell David, saying, Lodge not this night in the plains of the wilderness, but speedily pass over; lest the king be swallowed up, and all the people that are with him. 17. Now Jonathan and Ahimaaz stayed by En-rogel, (for they might not be seen to come into the city) and a wench went and told them: and they went and told king David. 18. Nevertheless a lad saw them, and told Absalom, but they went both of them away quickly, and came to a man's house in Bahurim, which had a well in his court, whither they went down. 19. And the woman took and spread a covering over the well's mouth, and spread ground corn thereon; and the thing was not known. 20. And when Absalom's servants came to the woman to the house, they said, Where is Ahimaaz and Jonathan? And the woman said unto them, They be gone over the brook of water. And when they had sought and could not find them, they returned to Jerusalem. 21. And it came to pass after they were departed, that they came up out of the well, and went and told king David, and said unto David, arise, and pass quickly over the water: for thus hath Ahithophel counselled against you.

We must now leave David's enemies pleasing themselves with the thought of a sure victory, by following Hushai's counsel, and sending summons, no doubt, to all the tribes of Israel, to come to the general rendezvous at a place appointed, pursuant to that counsel; and we next find David's friends in a close cabal, consulting how to get him notice of all this, that he might steer his course accordingly. Hushai tells the priests what had passed in council, *ver. 15.* But it should seem he was not sure, but that yet Ahithophel's counsel might be followed, and was therefore jealous, lest if he made not the best of his way the king would be *swallowed up*, and all the people that were with him, *ver. 16.* Perhaps, as he was called in to give his advice, *ver. 5.* so he was dismissed before they came to that resolve, *ver. 14.* in favour of his advice: Or he feared they might afterwards change their mind: However, it was good to provide against the worst, and therefore to hasten those valuable lives out of the reach of these destroyers.

Such strict guards did Absalom set upon all the avenues to Jerusalem, that they had much ado to get this necessary intelligence to David. 1. The young priests that were to be the messengers, were forced to seek out of the city, by En-rogel; which signifies as some say, *the fountain of a spy.* Sure it went ill with Jerusalem, when two such faithful priests as these were might not be seen to come into the city. 2. Instructions were sent to them by a poor simple wench, who probably went so that well under pretence of fetching water, *ver. 17.* If she carried the message by word of mouth, there was danger of her making some mistake or blunder in it; but providence can make a silly girl a trusty messenger, and serve its wise counsels by the foolish things of the world. 3. Yet by the vigilance of Absalom's spies, they were discovered, and information brought to Absalom of their motions. *A lad saw them and told him*, *ver. 18.* 4. They being aware that they were discovered, sheltered themselves in a friend's house in Bahurim, where David had refreshed himself but just before, *chap. xvi. 14.* there they were happily hid in a well, which now in summer time perhaps was dry, *ver. 18.* The woman of the house very ingeniously covered the mouth of the well with a cloth, on which she spread corn to dry, so that the pursuers were not aware that there was a well; else they had searched it, *ver. 12.* Thus far the woman did well; but we know not how to justify her farther concealing them with a lie, *ver. 20.* we must not do evil that good may come of it. However, hereby the messengers were protected, and the pursuers were defeated, and returned to Absalom without their prey: It was well Absalom did not hereupon fall upon their two fathers, Zadok and Abiathar, as Saul on Ahimelech for his kindness to David; but God restrained him. Being thus preserved, they brought their intelligence very faithfully to David, *ver. 21.* with this advice of his friends, that he should not delay to pass over Jordan, near to which, it seems, he was now set down: And there, as some think, he penned the forty-second and forty-third Psalms, looking back upon Jerusalem from the land of Jordan, Psalm xlii. 6.

22. Then David arose, and all the people that were with him, and they passed over Jordan: by the morning

ing light there lacked not one of them that was not gone over Jordan. 23. ¶ And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father. 24. Then David came to Mahanaim: and Absalom passed over Jordan, he and all the men of Israel with him. 25. ¶ And Absalom made Amasa captain of the host instead of Joab; which Amasa was a man's son whose name was Ithra an Israelite, that went in to Abigail the daughter of Nabash, sister to Zeruiah, Joab's mother. 26. So Israel and Absalom pitched in the land of Gilead. 27. And it came to pass when David was come to Mahanaim, that Shobi the son of Nabash of Rabbah of the children of Ammon, and Machir the son of Ammiel of Lo-debar and Barzillai the Gileadite of Rogelim, 28. Brought beds and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse. 29. And honey, and butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine for David, and for the people that were with him, to eat; for they said, The people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness.

Here is, 1. The transporting of David and his forces over Jordan, pursuant to the advice he had received from his friends at Jerusalem, ver. 22. He, and all that were with him went over in the night, whether in lerry-boats which probably always plied there, or through the fords, doth not appear: But special notice may be taken of it, that there lacked not one of them; none deserted him, though his distress was great, none stayed behind sick or weary, nor were any lost or cast away in passing the river. Herein some make him a type of the Messiah, who said in a difficult day, *Of all that thou hast given me, I have lost none.* Being got over Jordan he marched many miles forwards to Mahanaim, a Levite's city in the tribe of Gad, in the utmost border of that tribe, and not far from Rabbah, the chief city of the Ammonites. This city which Ith-bosheth had made his royal city, chap. ii. 8. David now made his head-quarters, ver. 24. And now he had time to raise an army wherewith to oppose the rebels, and gave them a warm reception.

2. The death of Ahithophel, ver. 23. He died by his own hands, *sic de se*, hanged himself for vexation that his counsel was not followed; for thereby, He thought himself slighted, and an intolerable slur cast upon his reputation for wisdom. His judgment always used to sway at the council board, but now another's opinion is thought wiser and better than his, his proud heart cannot bear the affront, it rises and swells, and the more he thinks of it the more violent the resentments grow, till they bring him at last to this desperate resolve, not to live to see another preferred before him. All men think him a wise man, but he thinks himself the only wise man, and therefore to be revenged on mankind for not thinking so too, he will die, that wisdom may die with him. The world is not worthy of such an oracle as he is, and therefore he will make them know the want of him. See what real enemies they are to themselves, that think too well of them, selves, and what mischiefs they run upon that are impatient of contempt. That will break a proud man's heart, that will not break an humble man's sleep. 2. He thought himself endangered and his life exposed. He concluded, that because his counsel was not followed, Absalom's cause would certainly miscarry, and then whoever would find David's mercy, he concluded, that he, who was the greatest criminal, and had particularly advised him to lie with his father's concubines, must be sacrificed to his justice; to prevent therefore the shame and terror of a public and solemn execution, he thus doth justice upon himself, and after all his reputation for wisdom, by this, his last act, puts a far greater disgrace upon himself than Absalom's privy council had put upon him, and answers his name Ahithophel, which signifies, *the brother of a fool.* Nothing exalteth folly so as self-murder doth. Observe, how deliberately he did it, and of malice prepense against himself; not in a heat, but he went home to his city, to his house to do it; and which is strange, took time to consider of it, and yet he did it. And to prove himself *compos mentis* when he did it, he first put his household in order, made his will as a man of sound memory and understanding, settled his estate, balanced his accounts; yet he that had sense and prudence enough to do this, had not consideration enough to revoke the sentence his pride and passion had put upon his own neck, or to much as to suspend the execution of it till he saw the event. Now herein we may see, 1. Contempt poured upon the wisdom of man; he that was more renowned for policy than ever any man was, play'd the fool with himself more than ever any man did. *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom*, when he sees him that was so great an oracle dying as a fool dies. 2. Honour done to the justice of God. When the wicked is thus *shamed in a work of their own hands, and sunk in a pit of their own digging, the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth*, and we must lay, *Higgainon, Selah*, it is a thing to be marked and meditated upon, *Psal. vii. 15, 16.* 3. Prayer answered and an honest cause served even by its enemies. Now, as David had prayed, Ahithophel's counsel was turned into foolishness to himself. Dr. Lightfoot supposeth, that David penned the fifty-fifth Psalm, upon occasion of Ahithophel's being in the plot against him, and that he is the man complained of, ver. 13. that had been *his equal, his guide, and his acquaintance*; and if so, this was an immediate answer to his prayer there, ver. 15. *Let a snare seize upon them, let them go down quickly into hell.* And Ahithophel's death was an advantage to David's interest; for had he digested that affront (as those must resolve to do a great many, that will live in this world) and continued his post at Absalom's elbow, he might have given him counsel afterwards that might have been of pernicious consequence to David. It is well that breath is stopt, and that head laid, from which nothing could be expected but mischief. It seems it was not then usual to disgrace the dead bodies of self-murderers, for Ahithophel was buried, we may suppose honourably buried, in the sepulchre of his father, though he deserved no better than the burial of an ass; see *Ecc. viii. 10.*

2. Absalom's pursuit of his father, he had now got all the men of Israel with him, as Hushai advised, and he himself at the head of them passed over Jordan, ver. 24. Not content that he had driven his good father to the utmost corner of the kingdom, he resolves to chase him out of the world. He pitched in the land of Gilead with all his forces, ready to give David battle, ver. 25. Absalom made one Amasa his general, ver. 25. whose father was by birth Jether, an Ishmaelite, 1 Chron. ii. 17. but by

religion Ithra (as he is here called) an Israelite; probably, he was not only proselyted, but having married a near relation of David's, was by some act of the state naturalized, and is therefore called an Israelite. His wife, Amasa's mother, was Abigail David's sister; his other sister, Zeruiah, Joab's mother, 1 Chron. ii. 16. So that Amasa was in the same relation to David that Joab was. In honour to his family, even while he was in arms against his father, Absalom made him commander in chief of all his forces. Jesse is here called Nabash, for many had two names; or perhaps, it was his wife's name.

4. The friends David met with in this distant country. Even Shobi a younger brother of the royal family of the Ammonites, was kind to him, ver. 27. it is probable, he had detested the indignity which his brother Hanun had done to David's ambassadors, and for that had received favours from David, which he now returns. Those that think their prosperity most confirmed, know not but, some time or other, they may stand in need of the kindness of those that now lie at their mercy, and may be glad to be beholden to them; which is a reason, why we should, as we have opportunity, do good to all men, for he that watereth, shall be watered also himself, when there is occasion. Machir, the son of Ammiel, was he that maintained Mephibosheth, chap. ix. 4. till David eased him of his charge; and is now repaid for it, by that generous man, who, it seems, was the common patron of distressed princes. Barzillai we shall hear of again. These, compassionating David and his men, now they were weary with a long march brought him furniture for his house, beds and basons; and provision for his table, wheat and barley, &c. ver. 28, 29. He did not put them under contribution, did not compel them to supply him, much less plunder them; but in token to their dutiful affection to him, their firm adherence to his government, and their sincere concern for him in his present straits, of their own good will, they brought in plenty of all that which he had occasion for. Let us learn hence to be generous and open-handed, according as our ability is, to all in distress, especially great men, to whom it is most grievous, and good men who deserve better treatment; and see how God sometimes makes up to his people that comfort from strangers, which they are disappointed of in their own families.

C H A P. XVIII.

This chapter puts a period to Absalom's rebellion and life, and so makes way for David to his throne again, whither the next chapter brings him back in peace and triumph. Here is, 1. David's preparations to engage the rebels, ver. 1—5. 2. The total defeat of Absalom's party and their dispersion, ver. 6—8. 3. The death of Absalom, and his burial, ver. 9—18. 4. The bringing of the tidings of it to David, who tarried at Mahanaim, ver. 19—32. 5. His bitter lamentation of Absalom, ver. 33.

1. AND David numbered the people that were with him, and set captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds over them. 2. And David sent forth a third part of the people under the hand of Joab, and a third part under the hand of Abishai, the son of Zeruiah, Joab's brother, and a third part under the hand of Ittai the Gittite: and the king said unto the people, I will surely go forth with you myself also. 3. But the people answered, Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away, they will not care for us: neither if half of us die, will they care for us; but now thou art worth ten thousand of us: therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city. 4. And the king said unto them, What seemeth you best, I will do. And the king stood by the gate-side, and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands. 5. And the king commanded Joab, and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom. 6. ¶ So the people went out into the field against Israel: and the battle was in the wood of Ephraim; 7. Where the people of Israel were slain before the servants of David, and there was there a great slaughter that day of twenty thousand men. 8. For the battle was there scattered over the face of all the country: and the wood devoured more people that day, than the sword devoured.

Which way David raised an army here, and what reinforcements were sent him, we are not told; many, it is likely, from all the coasts of Israel, at least from the neighbouring tribes, came to his assistance, so that by degrees he was able to make head against Absalom, as Ahithophel foresaw. Now here we have,

1. His army numbered and marshalled, ver. 1, 2. He had, no doubt, committed his cause to God by prayer, for that was his relief in all his afflictions, and then he took an account of his forces; Josephus saith, they were in all about four thousand; these he divided into regiments and companies, to each of which he appointed proper officers, and then disposed them, as is usual, into the right wing, the left wing, and the centre, two of which he committed to his two old experienced generals, Joab and Abishai, and the third to his new friend Ittai. Good orders and good conduct may sometimes be as serviceable in an army, as great numbers. Wisdom teaches us to make the best of the strength we have, and let it reach to the utmost.

2. Himself over-persuaded not to go in person to the battle. He was Absalom's back friend that persuaded him to go, and served his pride more than his prudence; David's true friends would not let him go; remembering what they had been told of Ahithophel's design to smite the king only. David shewed his affection for them, in being willing to venture with them, ver. 2. And they shewed theirs to him by opposing it. We must never reckon it an affront, to be gainstayed for our good, and by those that therein consult our interest. 1. They would by no means have him to expose himself, for (say they) thou art worth ten thousand of us. Thus ought good princes to be valued by their subjects, who for their safety must be willing to expose themselves. 2. They would not so far gratify the enemy, who would rejoice more in his fall, than in the defeat of the whole army. 3. He might be more serviceable to them by tarrying in the city, with a re-serve

serve of his forces there, from whence he might send them recruits. That may be a post of real service, which yet is not a post of danger. The king acquiesced in their reasons, and changed his purpose, *ver. 4. What seemeth you best, I will do.* It is no piece of wisdom to be stiff in our resolutions, but to be willing to hear reason, even from our inferiors, and to be over-ruled by their advice, when it appears to be for our own good. Whether the people's prudence had an eye to it or no, God's providence wisely ordered it, that David should not be in the field of battle, for then his tenderness had certainly interposed to save Absalom's life, whom God had determined to destroy.

3. The charge he gave concerning Absalom, *ver. 5.* When the army was drawn out rank and file, Josephus saith, he encouraged them, and prayed for them, but withal bid them all take heed of doing Absalom any hurt. How doth he render good for evil! Absalom would have David only smitten. David would have Absalom only spared. What foils are these to each other! Never was unnatural hatred to a father so strong as in Absalom; nor was ever natural affection to a child so strong as in David; in those each did their utmost, and shewed what they could do; how bad it is possible for a child to be to the best of fathers, and how good it is possible for a father to be to the worst of children, as if it were designed to be a resemblance of man's wickedness towards God, and God's mercy towards man, of which it is hard to say, whether is more amazing. *Deal gently,* saith David, by all means, *with the young man, even with Absalom, for my sake;* he is a young man rash and heady, and his age must excuse him; he is mine, whom I love, if you love me, be not severe with him. This charge supposeth David's strong expectation of success, having a good cause and a good God; he doubts not but Absalom would lie at their mercy, and therefore bids them deal gently with him, spare his life, and reserve him for his judgment.

Bishop Hall thus descants on this; "What means this ill placed love? this unjust mercy! Deal gently with a traitor! of all traitors, with a son! of all sons, with an Absalom! that graceless darling of so good a father! and all this for thy sake, whose crown, whose blood he hunts after! For whose sake must he be pursued, if forborne for thine? Must the cause of the quarrel be the motive of mercy? Even in the holiest parents, nature may be guilty of an injurious tenderness, of a bloody indulgence. But (saith he) was not this done in type of that unmeasurable mercy of the true King and Redeemer of Israel, who prayed for his persecutors, for his murderers: *Father, forgive them. Deal gently with them for my sake.*" When God sends an affliction to correct his children it is with this charge, deal gently with them for my sake; for he knows our frame.

4. A complete victory gained over Absalom's forces. The battle was fought in the wood of Ephraim, *ver. 6.* so called from some memorable action of the Ephraimites there, though it lay in the tribe of Gad. David thought fit to meet the enemy with his forces at some distance before they came up to Mahanaim, lest he should bring that city into trouble, which had so kindly sheltered him. The cause shall be decided by a pitched battle; Josephus represents the fight as very obstinate, but the rebels were at length totally routed, and twenty thousand men of them were slain, *ver. 7.* Now they smarted justly for their treason against their lawful prince, their uneasiness under so good a government, and their base ingratitude to so good a governor, and found what it was to take up arms for an usurper, who with his kisses and caresses had wheedled them into their own ruin. Now where are the rewards, the preferments, the golden days, they promised themselves from him? Now they see what it is to take counsel against the Lord, and his anointed, and to think of breaking his bonds asunder. And that they might see God fought against them, 1. They are conquered by a few, an army, in all probability, much inferior to theirs in number. 2. By that slight, with which they hoped to save themselves, they destroyed themselves: the wood, which they sought to for shelter, devoured more than the sword: that they might see how when they thought themselves safe from David's men, and said, surely the bitterness of death is past, yet the justice of God pursued them, and suffered them not to live. What refuge can rebels find from divine vengeance? The pits and bogs, the slumps and thickets, and, as the Chaldee paraphrasts understand it, the wild beasts of the wood were the death of multitudes of the dispersed distracted Israelites, some think, beside the twenty thousand that were slain with the sword. God herein fought for David, and yet fought against him; for all these that were slain were his own subjects, and the common interest of his kingdom was weakened by it. The Romans allowed no triumph for a victory in a civil war.

9. And Absalom met the servants of David; and Absalom rode upon a mule, and the mule went under the thick boughs of a great oak, and his head caught hold of the oak, and he was taken up between the heaven and the earth; and the mule that was under him went away. 10. And a certain man saw it, and told Joab, and said, Behold, I saw Absalom hanged in an oak. 11. And Joab said unto the man that told him, And behold, thou sawest him, and why didst thou not smite him there to the ground? and I would have given thee ten shekels of silver and a girdle? 12. And the man said unto Joab, Though I should receive a thousand shekels of silver in mine hand, yet would I not put forth mine hand against the king's son: for in our hearing, the king charged thee, and Abihai, and Ittai, saying, Beware that none touch the young man Absalom, 13. Otherwise I should have wrought falsehood against mine own life: for there is no matter hid from the king, and thou thyself wouldst have set thyself against me. 14. Then said Joab, I may not tarry thus with thee. And he took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak. 15. And ten young men that bare Joab's armour, compassed about and smote Absalom, and slew him. 16. And Joab blew the trumpet, and the people returned from pursuing after Israel: for Joab held back the people. 17. And they took Absalom, and cast him into a great pit in the wood, and laid a very great heap of stones upon him: and all Israel fled every one to his tent. 18. ¶ Now

No. XLIX.

Absalom in his life time had taken and reared up for himself a pillar, which is in the king's dale: for he said, I have no son to keep my name in remembrance: and he called the pillar after his own name, and it is called unto this day, Absalom's place.

Here is Absalom, in a wood too, quite at a loss; at his wit's end first, and then at his life's end. He that began the fight big with expectation of triumphing over David himself, with whom, if he had had him in his power, he would not have dealt gently, is now in the greatest consternation when he meets the servants of David, *ver. 9.* Though they were forbidden to meddle with him, he durst not look them in the face: but, finding they were near him (to use the common expression) he claps spurs to his mule, and makes the best of his way through thick and thin, as we say, and so rides headlong upon his own destruction. Thus he that flies from the fear, shall fall into the pit, and he that getteth up out of the pit, shall be taken in the snare, *Jer. xlviii. 44.* David is inclined to spare him, but divine justice passeth sentence upon him as a traitor, and sees it executed; that he hang by the neck, be caught alive, be bowelled, and his body disposed of disgracefully.

1. He is hanged by the neck. Rolling furiously, neck or nothing, under the thick boughs of a great oak, which hung low, and had never been cropped, either the twilted branches, or some one forked bough of the oak, caught hold of his head, either by his neck, or, as some think by his long hair, which had been too much his pride, and was now justly made a halter for him; and there he hung, so astonished, that he could not use his hands to help himself, or so intangled, that his hands could not help him, but the more he struggled the more he was embarrassed. This set him up for a fair mark for the servants of David, and he had the terror and shame of seeing himself thus exposed, while he could do nothing for his own relief, neither fight nor fly.

Observe concerning this, 1. That his mule went away from under him, as if glad to get clear of such a burden, and resign it to the ignominious tree. Thus the whole creation groans under the burden of man's corruption, but shall shortly be delivered from its load, *Rom. viii. 21, 22.* 2. That he hung between heaven and earth, as unworthy of either, as abandoned of both; earth would not keep him, heaven would not take him, hell therefore opens her mouth to receive him. 3. That this was a very surprising unusual thing; it was fit it should be so, his crime being so monstrous: if in his flight his mule had thrown him, and left him half dead upon the ground, till the servants of David had come up and dispatched him, the same thing had been done as effectually; but that had been too common a fate for so uncommon a criminal; God will here, as in the case of those other rebels, Dathan and Abiram, create a new thing, that it may be understood, how much this man hath provoked the Lord, *Numb. xvi. 29, 30.* Absalom is here hung up, in terror, to frighten children from disobedience to their parents: see *Prov. xxx. 17.*

2. He is caught alive by one of the servants of David, who went straight and told Joab in what posture he found that arch rebel, *ver. 10.* Thus was he set up for a spectacle, as well as a mark, that the righteous may see him, and laugh at him, *Psal. li. 6.* while he has this farther vexation in his breast, that of all the friends he had courted and confided in, and thought he had sure in his interest, though he hung long enough to have been relieved, yet he had none at hand to disentangle him. Joab chides the man for not dispatching him, *ver. 11.* telling him, if he had given that bold stroke, he would have rewarded him with ten half crowns, and a girdle, i. e. a captain's commission, which, perhaps, was signified by the delivery of a belt or girdle; see *Isa. xxii. 21.* But the man, though zealous enough against Absalom, justified himself in not doing it: Dispatch him? saith he, not for all the world: it would have cost me my head; and thou thyself was witness to the king's charge concerning him, *ver. 12.* and, for all thy talk, wouldst have been my persecutor, if I had done it, *ver. 13.* Those that love the treason hate the traitor. Joab could not deny this, nor blame the man for his caution, and therefore makes him no answer, but breaks off the discourse under colour of haste, *ver. 14. I may not tarry thus with thee.* Superiors should consider a reproof before they give it, lest they be ashamed of it afterwards, and find themselves unable to make it good.

3. He is (as I may say) bowelled and quartered, as traitors are, so pitifully mangled is he as he hangs there, and receives his death in such a manner, as to see all its terrors, and feel all its pains. 1. Joab throws three darts into his body, which put him no doubt to exquisite torment, while he is yet alive in the midst of the oak, *ver. 14.* I know not whether Joab can be justified in this direct disobedience to the command of his sovereign; was this to deal gently with the young man? Would David have suffered him to do it, if he had been upon the spot? Yet this may be said for him, that while he broke the order of a too indulgent father, he did real service both to his king and country, and had endangered the welfare of both, if he had not done it. *Salus populi suprema lex.* 2. Joab's young men, ten of them, have each of them a blow or throw at him, before he is dispatched, *ver. 15.* they surrounded him, made a ring about him in triumph, and they smote him and slew him. So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord. Joab hereupon sounds a retreat, *ver. 16.* The danger is over now Absalom is slain; the people will soon return to their allegiance to David, and therefore no more blood shall be spilt; no prisoners are taken, to be tried as traitors, and made examples; let every man return to his tent; they are all the king's subjects; and all his good subjects again.

4. His body is disposed of disgracefully, *ver. 17, 18.* They cast it into a great pit in the wood; they would not bring it to his father, for that circumstance would have added to his grief, nor would they preserve it to be buried according to his order, but threw it into the next pit with indignation. Now where is his beauty he had been so proud of, and for which he had been so much admired? Where are his aspiring projects, and the castles he had built in the air? His thoughts perish, and he with them. And to signify how heavy his iniquity lay upon his bones, as the prophet speaks, *Ezek. xxxii. 27.* they raised a great heap of stones upon him, to be a monument of his villainy, and to signify that he ought to have been stoned as a rebellious son, *Deut. xxi. 21.* Travellers say, the place is taken notice of to this day, and it is common for passengers to throw a stone to this heap, with words to this purpose: *Curst be the memory of rebellious Absalom, and curst for ever be all wicked children that rise up in rebellion against their parents.* To aggravate the ignominy of Absalom's burial, the historian takes notice of a pillar he had erected in the valley of Kidron, near Jerusalem, to be a monument for himself and to keep his name in remembrance, *ver. 18.* at the foot of which, it is probable, he designed to be buried. What foolish insignificant projects do proud men fill their heads with! And what care do many people take about the disposal of their bodies when they are dead, that have no care at all what shall become of their precious souls; Absalom had had three sons, *chap. xiv. 27.* but it seems now he had none. God had taken them away by death; and justly is a rebellious son written childless; to make up the want, he erects this pillar for a memorial; yet

in this also, providence crosseth him, and a rude heap of stones shall be his monument instead of his marble pillar. Thus they that exalt themselves shall be abased. His care was to have his name kept in remembrance, and it is so, to his everlasting dishonour. He could not be content in the obscurity of the rest of David's sons, of whom nothing is recorded but their names, but would be famous, and is therefore justly made for ever infamous. The pillar shall bear his name, but not to his credit; it was designed for Abfalom's glory, but proved Abfalom's folly.

19. ¶ Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, Let me now run, and bear the king tidings, how that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies. 20. And Joab said unto him, Thou shalt not bear tidings this day, but thou shalt bear tidings another day: but this day thou shalt bear no tidings, because the king's son is dead. 21. Then said Joab to Cush, Go tell the king what thou hast seen. And Cush bowed himself unto Joab, and ran. 22. Then said Ahimaaz the son of Zadok, yet again to Joab, But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cush. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready? 23. But howsoever (said he) let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and over-ran Cush. 24. And David sat between the two gates: and the watchman went up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold, a man running alone. 25. And the watchman cried, and told the king, And the king said, If he be alone, there is tidings in his mouth. And he came apace, and drew near. 26. And the watchman saw another man running, and the watchman called unto the porter, and said, Behold, another man running alone. And the king said, He also bringeth tidings. 27. And the watchman said, Methinketh the running of the foremost is like the running of Ahimaaz the son of Zadok. And the king said, He is a good man, and cometh with good tidings. 28. And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king. 29. And the king said, Is the young man Abfalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was. 30. And the king said, unto him, Turn aside, and stand here. And he turned aside and stood still. 31. And, behold, Cush came; and Cush said, Tidings, my lord the king: for the LORD hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee. 32. And the king said unto Cush, Is the young man Abfalom safe? And Cush answered, The enemies of my lord the king, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is. 33. ¶ And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Abfalom, my son, my son Abfalom? would God I had died for thee, O Abfalom, my son, my son?

Abfalom's business is done; we are now told,

1. How David was informed of it. He stayed behind at the city of Mahanaim, some miles from the wood where the battle was, and in the utmost border of the land: Abfalom's scattered forces all made homewards towards Jordan, which was the contrary way from Mahanaim, so that his watchmen could perceive nothing how the battle went, till an express came on purpose to bring advice of the issue, which the king sat in the gate expecting to hear, ver. 21.

1. Cush was the man Joab ordered to carry the tidings, ver. 21. an Ethiopian, so his name signifies, and some think he was so by birth; a black that waited on Joab, probably one of the ten that had helped to dispatch Abfalom, ver. 15. as some think, though it was dangerous for one of those to bring the news to David, lest his fate should be the same with theirs that reported to him Saul's death and Ish-bosheth's.

2. Ahimaaz the young priest (one of those who brought David intelligence of Abfalom's motions, chap. xvii. 17.) was very forward to be the messenger of these tidings; so transported was he with joy that his cloud was blown over; let him go tell the king, that the LORD hath avenged him of his enemies, ver. 19. This he desired, not so much in hope of a reward, he was above that, as that he might have the pleasure and satisfaction of bringing the king, whom he loved, this good news. Joab knew David better than Ahimaaz did, and that the tidings of Abfalom's death, which must conclude the story, would spoil the acceptableness of all the rest; and he loves Ahimaaz too well to let him be the messenger of these tidings, ver. 20. they are fitter to be brought by a footman than by a priest. However, when Cush was gone, Ahimaaz begged hard for leave to run after him, and with great importunity obtained it, ver. 22, 23. One would wonder why he should be so very fond of this office, when another was employed in it. 1. Perhaps it was to shew his swiftness, observing how heavily Cush ran, and that he took the worse way though the nearest; he had a mind to shew how fast he could run, and that he could go the farthest way about, and yet beat Cush. No great praise for a priest to be swift of foot, yet perhaps Ahimaaz was proud of it. 2. Perhaps it was in prudence and tenderness to the king that he desired it. He knew he could get before Cush, and therefore was willing to prepare the king with an amusing story, for the plain truth which Cush was ordered to tell him. If bad news must come, it is best that it come gradually, and will be the better borne.

3. They are both discovered by the watchmen on the gate of Mahanaim; Ahimaaz first, ver. 24. for though Cush had the leading, he soon out-got him; but presently after Cush appeared, ver. 25. 1. When the king hears of one running alone, he concludes he is an express, ver. 26. If he be alone there is tidings in his mouth, for if they had been beaten, and were flying back from the enemy, there would have been many. 2. When he hears it is Ahimaaz, he concludes he brings good news, ver. 27. Ahimaaz, it seems, was so famous for running cleverly, that he was known by it at a distance; and so eminently good, that it is taken for granted, if he be the messenger, the news must needs be good: he is a good man, zealously affected to the king's interest, and would not bring bad news. It is pity but the good tidings of the gospel should always be brought by good men, and how welcome should they be to us for their message sake!

4. Ahimaaz is very forward to proclaim the victory, ver. 28. cries at a distance, Peace, there is peace, peace after war, which is doubly welcome. All is well, my lord O king, the danger is over, and we may return, when the king pleaseth, to Jerusalem. And when he comes near, he tells him the news more particularly, they are all cut off that lift up their hand against the king, and as became a priest, while he gives the king joy of it, he gives God the glory of it, the God of peace and war, the God of salvation and victory: Blessed be the LORD thy God, that has done this for thee, as thy God, pursuant to the promises made to uphold thy throne, chap. xvii. 16. When he said this, he fell down upon his face, not only in reverence to the king, but in humble adoration of God, whose name he praiseth for this success. By directing David thus to give God thanks for his victory, he prepares him for the approaching news of its alloy. The more our hearts are fixed and enlarged in thanksgiving to God for our mercies, the better disposed we shall be to bear with patience the afflictions mixed with them. Poor David is so much a father, that he forgets he is a king, and therefore cannot rejoice in the news of a victory, till he knew whether the young man Abfalom be safe; for whom his heart seems to tremble, almost as Eli's in a like case for the ark of God. Ahimaaz soon discerns what Joab intimated to him, that the death of the king's son would make the tidings of the day very unwelcome, and therefore in his report leaves that matter doubtful, and though he gives occasion to suspect how it was, yet that the thunderclap might not come too suddenly upon the poor perplexed king, he refers him to the next messenger, whom they saw coming, for a more particular account of it. When Joab sent the king's servant, viz. Cush, and me thy servant, to bring the news, I saw a great tumult, occasioned by something extraordinary, as you will hear by and by, but I have nothing to say about it, I have delivered that which was my message; Cush is better able to inform you than I am. I will not be the messenger of evil tidings; nor will I pretend to know that which I cannot give a perfect account of. He is therefore bid to stand by till Cush came, ver. 30. and now, we may suppose, he entertains the king with a more particular account of the victory, which was the thing he came to bring the news of.

5. Cush the slow post proves the sure one, and besides the confirmation of the news of the victory which Ahimaaz has brought, ver. 31. The LORD hath avenged thee of all them that rose up against thee; he satisfied the king's enquiry concerning Abfalom, ver. 30. Is he safe? said David; yes, saith Cush; he is safe in his grave: but he tells the news so handsomely, that, how unwelcome soever the message was, the messenger could have no blame. He doth not tell him plainly Abfalom was hanged, and run through, and buried under a heap of stones; but only that his fate was what he desired might be the fate of all that were traitors against the king, his crown and dignity. The enemies of my lord the king, whoever they are, and all that rise against thee to do thee hurt; be as that young man is; I need wish them no worse.

Lastly, David forgets all the joy of his deliverance, and is quite overwhelmed with the sorrowful tidings of Abfalom's death, ver. 33. As soon as he perceived by Cush's inuendo, that Abfalom was dead, he asked no more questions, but fell into a passion of weeping, retired from company, and abandoned himself to sorrow; as he was going up to his chamber, he was over-heard to say, O my son Abfalom, my son, my son Abfalom; alas for thee, I lament thee: how art thou fallen? Would God I had died for thee, and that thou hadst remained alive this day, so the Chaldee adds, O Abfalom, my son, my son. I wish I could see reason to think that this arose from a concern about Abfalom's everlasting state, and that he therefore wished to have died for him, because he had good hopes of his own salvation, and of Abfalom's repentance if he had lived: it rather seems to have been spoken inconsiderately, but in a passion, and it was his infirmity. He is to be blamed, 1. For shewing so great a fondness for a graceless son, that was justly abandoned both of God and man, only because he was handsome and witty it may be. 2. For quarrelling not only with divine providence, the disposals of which he ought silently to acquiesce in, but with divine justice the judgments of which he ought to adore and subscribe to, see how Bildad argues, Job viii. 3, 4. If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away in their transgression, thou shouldst submit, for God doth pervert judgment? See Lev. x. 3. 3. For opposing the justice of the nation, which as king, he was intrusted with the administration of, and which with other public interests he ought to prefer before any natural affection. 4. For despising the mercy of his deliverance, and the deliverance of his family and kingdom from Abfalom's wicked designs, as if this were no mercy, nor worth given thanks for, because it cost the life of Abfalom. 5. For indulging a strong passion, and speaking unadvisedly with his lips. He now forgot his own reasonings upon the death of another child, Can I bring him back again? And his own resolution to keep his mouth as with a bridle, when his heart was hot within him; and his own practice at other times, when he quieted himself as a child that is weaned from its mother. The best men are not always in a like good frame, what we over-loved, we are apt to over-grieve for; in each affection, therefore it is wisdom to have rule over our own spirits, and to keep a strict guard upon ourselves when that is removed from us which was very dear to us. Losers think they may have leave to speak, but little said is soon amended. The penitent, patient sufferer sitteth alone, and keepeth silence, Lam. iii. 28. or rather with Job, Blessed be the name of the LORD.

C H A P. XIX.

We left David's army in triumph, and yet David himself in tears, now here we have, 1. His return to himself by the persuasion of Joab, ver. 1—3. 2. His return to his kingdom from his present banishment. (1.) The men of Israel were forward of themselves to bring him back, ver. 9, 10. (2.) The men of Judah were dealt with by David's agents to do it, ver. 11—14. and did it, ver. 15. 3. At the king's coming over Jordan Shimei's treason is pardoned, ver. 16—23. Mephibosheth's failure is excused, ver. 24—30. And Barzillai's kindness is thankfully owned and recompensed to his son, ver. 31—40. 4. The men of Israel quarrelled with the men of Judah

Judah for not calling them to the ceremony of the king's restoration, which occasioned a new rebellion, in the next chapter, ver. 41—43.

1. **A**ND it was told Joab, Behold, the king weepeth and mourneth for Absalom. 2. And the victory that day was turned into mourning unto all the people: for the people heard say that day, how the king was grieved for his son. 3. And the people gat them by stealth that day into the city, as people being ashamed steal away when they flee in battle. 4. But the king covered his face, and the king cried with a loud voice, O my son Absalom, O Absalom, my son, my son! 5. And Joab came into the house to the king, and said, Thou hast shamed this day the faces of all thy servants, which this day have saved thy life, and the lives of thy sons, and of thy daughters, and the lives of thy wives, and the lives of thy concubines: 6. In that thou lovest thine enemies, and hatest thy friends: for thou hast declared this day, that thou regardest neither princes nor servants: for this day I perceive, that if Absalom had lived, and all we had died this day, then it had pleased thee well. 7. Now therefore arise, go forth, and speak comfortably unto thy servants: for I swear by the LORD, if thou go not forth, there will not tarry one with thee this night: and that will be worse unto thee than all the evil that befel thee from thy youth until now. 8. Then the king arose, and sat in the gate: And they told unto all the people, saying, Behold, the king doth sit in the gate: and all the people came before the king: for Israel had fled every man to his tent.

Soon after the messengers had brought the news of the death and defeat of Absalom to the court at Mahanaim, Joab and his victorious army followed to grace the king's triumphs, and receive his farther orders. Now here we are told,

1. What a damp (what a baulk it was to them to find the king in tears for Absalom's death, which they construed as a token of his displeasure against them, for what they had done, whereas they expected him to have met them with joy and thanks for their good services. It was told Joab, ver. 1. The report of it went through the army, ver. 2. *How the king was grieved for his son.* The people will take particular notice what their princes say and do: the more eyes we have upon us, and the greater our influence is, the more need we have to speak and act wisely, and to govern our passions strictly.

Nay, when they came to the city they found the king in close mourning, ver. 4. He covered his face, and would not so much as look up, nor take any notice of the generals when they attended him. It could not but surprise them to find, 1. How the king proclaimed his passion, which he ought to have been ashamed of, and which he should have striven to smother and conceal, if he had consulted either his reputation or courage, which was lessened by his mean submission to the tyranny of so absurd a passion: or his interest in the people, which would be prejudicial by his discountenancing what was done in zeal for his honour and the public safety. Yet see how he avows his grief, *He cries with a loud voice, O my son, Absalom.* My servants are all come home safe, but where is my son? He is dead, and dying in sin, I fear he is lost for ever, I cannot now say, *I shall go to him,* for my soul shall not be gathered with such sinners, what shall be done for thee, *O Absalom, my son, my son?* 2. How he prolonged his passion even till the army was come up to him, which must be some time after he received the first intelligence. If he had contented himself to give vent to his passion for an hour or two, when he first heard the news, it had been excusable; but to continue it thus for so ill a son as Absalom, like Jacob for so good a son as Joseph, with a resolution to go to the grave mourning, and to stain his triumphs with his tears, was very unwise and very unworthy.

Now, see how ill this was taken by the people: They were loth to blame the king, for whatever he did used to please them, chap. iii. 36. but they took it as a great mortification to them. *Their victory was turned into mourning,* ver. 2. *They stole into the city as men ashamed,* ver. 3. In compliment to their sovereign, they would not rejoice in that which they perceived to be afflictive to him, and yet they could not but be uneasy, that they were thus obliged to conceal their joy. Superiors ought not to put such hardships as these on their inferiors.

2. How plainly and passionately Joab reproved David for his indiscreet management of himself in this critical juncture. David never more needed the hearts of his subjects than now, nor was ever more concerned to secure his interest in their affections, and therefore whatever tended to disoblige them now, was the most impolitic thing he could do, and the greatest wrong imaginable to his friends that adhered to him. Joab therefore takes him to task, ver. 5, 6, 7. where he speaks a great deal of reason, but not with that respect and deference which he owed to his prince. *Is it fit to say to a king thou art wicked?* A plain case may be fairly pleaded with those that are above us, and they may be reproved for what they do amiss, but it must not be done with rudeness and insolence.

David indeed needed to be roused and alarmed; and Joab thought it no time to dally with him. If superiors do that which is foolish, they must neither think it strange, nor take it ill if their inferiors tell them of it, perhaps too bluntly. 1. Joab magnifies the services of David's soldiers. *This day they have saved thy life,* and therefore deserve to be taken notice of, and have reason to resent it if they be not. It is implied that Absalom, whom he honoured with his tears, fought his ruin, and the ruin of his family, while those, whom by his tears he put a slight upon, were such as preserved him from ruin, and all that is dear to him. Great mischiefs have risen to princes from the contempt of great merits. 2. He aggravates the discouragement David had given them; *thou hast shamed their faces,* for while they have shewed such a value for thy life, thou hast shewn no value for theirs, but prefer a wicked married lad, a false traitor to his king and country, whom we are happily rid of, before all thy wise counsellors, brave commanders, and loyal subjects. What can be more absurd than to love thine enemies and to hate thy friends? 3. He adviseth him to render himself immediately at the head of his troops, to smile upon them, welcome them home, congratulate their successes, and return them thanks for their services. Even those that may be commanded, yet expect to be thanked when they do well, and ought to be so. 4. He threatens him with another

rebellion if he would not do this, intimating, that rather than serve so ungrateful a prince, he himself would head a revolt from him; and then (so confident is Joab of his own interest in the people) *there will not tarry with thee one man.* If I go, they all go. Thou hast now no cause to cry, but I will give thee something to cry for, as Josephus expresseth it; with a true and more bitter mourning.

3. How prudently and mildly David took the reproof and counsel given him, ver. 8. He shook off his grief, anointed his head, and washed his face, that he might not appear unto men to mourn, and then made his appearance in public in the gate, which was the guild-hall of the city: Hither the people flocked to him to congratulate his and their safety, and all was well. Note, when we are convinced of a fault we must amend it, though we are told of it by our inferiors, and indecently, or in heat and passion.

9. ¶ And all the people were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel, saying, The king saved us out of the hand of our enemies, and he delivered us out of the hand of the Philistines; and now he is fled out of the land for Absalom. 10. And Absalom, whom we anointed over us, is dead in battle: now therefore why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back? 11. ¶ And king David sent to Zadok and to Abiathar the priests, saying, Speak unto the elders of Judah, saying, Why are ye the last to bring the king back to his house? (seeing the speech of all Israel is come to the king, even to his house.) 12. Ye are my brethren, ye are my bones and my flesh; wherefore then are ye the last to bring back the king? 13. And say ye to Amasa, Art thou not of my bone, and of my flesh? God do so to me, and more also, if thou be not captain of the host before me continually in the room of Joab. 14. And he bowed the heart of all the men of Judah, even as the heart of one man, so that they sent this word unto the king, Return thou and all thy servants. 15. So the king returned and came to Jordan: and Judah came to Gilgal, to go to meet the king, to conduct the king over Jordan.

It is strange that David did not immediately upon the defeat and dispersion of Absalom's forces march with all expedition back to Jerusalem, to regain the possession of his capital city, while the rebels were all in confusion, and before they could rally again: What occasion was there to bring him back? Could not he himself go back with the victorious army he had with him in Gilead? He could, no doubt; but, 1. He would come back as a prince with the consent and unanimous approbation of the people, and not as a conqueror forcing his way: To restore their liberties, and not to take this advantage to seize them, or encroach upon them. 2. He would come back in peace and safety, and be sure that he would meet with no difficulty or opposition in his return, and therefore would be satisfied that the people were well affected to him before he would stir. 3. He could come back in honour, and like himself; and therefore would not come back at the head of his forces, but in the arms of his subjects; for the prince that has wisdom and goodness enough to make himself his people's darling, without doubt looks greater, and makes a much better figure, than the prince that has strength enough to make himself his people's terror.

It is resolved therefore that David must be brought back to Jerusalem his own city, and his own house there, with some ceremony, and here we have the matter concerted.

1. The men of Israel (i. e. the ten tribes) were the first that talked of it, ver. 9, 10. The people were at strife about it, it was the great subject of discourse and dispute throughout all the country: Some perhaps opposed it, let him either come back himself, or stay where he is; others appear zealous for it, and reasoned as follows here, to further the design. (1.) That David had formerly helped them, had fought their battles, subdued their enemies, and done them many a good turn, and therefore it was a shame he should continue banished from their country, who had been so great a benefactor to it. Note, Good services done to the public, though they may be forgotten for a while, yet will be remembered again when men come to their right minds. (2.) That Absalom had now failed them. We were foolishly sick of the cedar, and chose the branch to reign over us, but we have had enough of him, he is consumed, and we had a fair escape of being consumed with him, let us therefore return to our allegiance, and think of bringing the king back. Perhaps this was all the strife among them, not a dispute whether the king should be brought back or no, all agreed it should be done, but they could not agree whose fault it was that it was not done; as it is usual in such cases, every one justified himself and blamed his neighbour. The people laid the fault upon the elders, and the elders on the people, and one tribe upon another. Mutual excitements to the doing of a good work are laudable, but not mutual accusations for the not doing it; for usually when public services are neglected, all sides must share in the blame, each might do more than they do, as in reformation of manners, healing of divisions, and the like.

2. The men of Judah, with good management, were the first that did it. It is strange they were not so forward as the rest, though they were David's own tribe. David had intelligence of the good disposition of all the rest towards him, but nothing from Judah, though he had always been particularly careful of them. But we do not always find the most kindness from those whom we have reason to expect it from. Yet David would not return till he knew the sense of his own tribe; *Judah was his law giver,* Psal. lx. 7. That his way home might be the more clear.

1. He employs Zadok and Abiathar, the two chief priests, to treat with the elders of Judah, and to excite them to give the king an invitation back to his house, even to his house which was the glory of their tribe, ver. 11, 12. No men more proper to negotiate the affair than the two priests, who were firm to David's interest, were prudent men, and had a great influence upon the people. Perhaps the men of Judah were remiss and careless, and did it not, because nobody put them on to do it, and then it was proper to stir them up to it. Many will follow that will not lead in a good work, and would do it if they were but spoken to: pity that should be wanting. Or perhaps they were so sensible of the greatness of the provocation they had given to David, by joining with Absalom, that they were afraid to bring him back, despairing of his favours; he therefore warrants his agents to assure them of it, with this reason, *ye are my brethren, my bone and my flesh,* and therefore I cannot be severe with you. The son of David has been

been pleased to call us brethren, *his bone and his flesh*, which encourageth us to hope we shall find favour with him. Or perhaps they were willing to see what the rest of the tribes would do, before they stirred, with which they are here upbraided; are told that the speech of all Israel is come to the king to invite him back, and shall Judah be the last, that should have been the first? Where is now the celebrated bravery of that royal tribe? Where its loyalty? Note, We should be stirred up to that which is great and good, by the examples both of our ancestors and of our neighbours, and by the consideration of our rank. Let not the first in dignity be last in duty.

2. He courts Amasa particularly into his interest, who had been Abalom's general, but was his own nephew as well as Joab, ver. 13. He owns him for his kinsman, and promiseth him that if he would appear for him now, he would make him captain-general of all his forces in the room of Joab: Would not only pardon him, which it may be Amasa questioned, but prefer him. Sometimes there is nothing lost in purchasing the friendship of one that has been an enemy. Amasa's interest might do David good service at this juncture. But if David did wisely for himself to design Amasa this post, Joab being now grown intolerably haughty; yet he did not do kindly by Amasa to let his rebellion be known, for it occasioned his death by Joab's hand, chap. xx. 10.

2. The point was hereby gained. He bowed the hearts of the men of Judah to pass a vote, *nemine contradicente*, for the recall of the king, ver. 14. God's providence by the priests' persuasions, and Amasa's interest, brought them to this resolve. David stirred not till he received this invitation, and then he came as far back as Jordan, at which river they were to meet him, ver. 15. Our Lord Jesus will rule in those that invite him to the throne in their hearts, and not till he is invited. He first bows the heart, and makes it willing in the day of his power, and then rules in the midst of his enemies, Psalm cx. 2, 3.

16. ¶ And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which was of Bahurim, hastened and came down with the men of Judah, to meet king David. 17. And there were a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king. 18. And there went over a ferry-boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good: and Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king as he was come over Jordan: 19. And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. 20. For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph, to go down to meet my lord the king. 21. But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD's anointed? 22. And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know, that I am this day king over Israel? 23. Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die: And the king sware unto him.

Perhaps Jordan was never passed with so much solemnity, nor with so many remarkable occurrences, as it was now, since Israel passed it under Joshua. David in his afflictive flight, remembered God particularly from the land of Jordan, Psalm xlii. 6. and now that land, more than any other, was graced with the glories of his return. David's soldiers furnished themselves with accommodations for their transport over this river, but for his own family, a ferry boat was sent on purpose to attend that, ver. 18. A fleet of boats, say some: a bridge of boats was made, so others; the best convenience they had to serve him with.

Two remarkable persons met him on the banks of Jordan, that had both of them abused him wretchedly when he was in his flight.

1. Ziba, who had abused him with his fair tongue, and by accusing his master, had obtained from the king a grant of his estate, chap. xvi. 4. A greater abuse he could not have done him, than by imposing upon his credulity, to draw him in to do a thing so ungrateful to the remains of his friend Jonathan. He comes now with a retinue of sons and servants to meet the king, ver. 17. that he might obtain the king's favour, and so come off the better, when Mephibosheth would shortly undeceive him, and clear himself, ver. 26.

2. Shimei, who had abused him with his foul tongue, railed at him, and cursed him, chap. xvi. 5. If David had gone by the worst, no doubt he would have continued to trample upon him, and have gloried in what he had done; but now he sees him coming home in triumph, and returning to his throne, he thinks it his interest to make his peace with him. Those who now slight and abuse the son of David, would be glad to do so when he shall come in his glory, but it will be too late. Shimei, to recommend himself to the king, 1. Came with good company, with the men of Judah, as one entirely in their interest. 2. He brought a regiment of the men of Benjamin with him, a thousand, of which perhaps he was chiliarch or commander in chief, offering his own and their service to the king; or perhaps they were volunteers, whom by his interest he had got together to meet the king, which was the more obliging, because there were none but these of all the tribes of Israel that appeared to pay him this respect, but Judah only. 3. What he did he hastened to do; he lost no time, *Agree with thine adversary quickly, while thou art in the way.*

Here is, 1. The criminal's submission, ver. 19, 20. He fell down before the king, as a suppliant, and that he might be thought sincere, he did it publicly before all David's servants, and his friends the men of Judah, yea, and before his own thousand. The offence was public; therefore the submission ought to be so. He owns his crime, *Thy servant doth know that I have sinned*; he aggravates it, *I did perversely*; he begs the king's pardon, *let not the king impute iniquity to thy servant*, i. e. deal with me as I deserve; he intimates, that it was below the king's grant and generous mind to take it to his heart; and pleads his early return to his allegiance, that he was the first of all the house of Joseph (i. e. of Israel, who in the beginning of David's reign had distinguished themselves from Judah, by their adherence to Ish-bosheth, chap. ii. 10.) that came to meet the king. He came

first, that by his example of duty the rest might be induced, and by his experience of the king's clemency, the rest might be encouraged to follow.

2. A motion made for judgment against him, ver. 21. *Shall not Shimei be put to death* for a traitor? Let him of all men be made an example. Abishai moved it, who would have ventured his life to have been his death, then when he was cursing, chap. xvi. 9. David did not think fit to have it done then, because his judicial power was cut short, but now it was restored; why should not the law have its course? Abishai herein consulted David's honour more than his true interest. Princes have need to arm themselves against temptation to severity.

3. His discharge by the king's order, ver. 22, 23. He rejected Abishai's motion with displeasure; *What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah?* The less we have to do with those that are of an angry revengeful spirit, and that put us upon doing what is harsh and rigorous, the better. He looked upon those prosecutors as *adversaries to him*, though they pretended friendship and zeal for his honour. Those who put us upon doing any ill thing; are real satans, adversaries to us. They were adversaries, 1. To his inclination, which was to clemency. He knew that *he was this day king in Israel*, restored to and re-established in his kingdom, and therefore his honour inclined him to forgive. It is the glory of kings to forgive those that humble and surrender themselves *Satis est prostrasse leoni*. His joy inclined him to forgive, the pleasantness of his spirit on this great occasion forbade the entrance of any thing that was sour and peevish: joyful days should be forgiving days. Yet this was not all, his experience of God's mercy in restoring him to his kingdom, from which he knew it was for his sin that he was excluded, inclined him to shew mercy to Shimei. They that are forgiven must forgive. David had severely revenged the abuses done to his ambassadors by the Ammonites, chap. xii. 31. but easily passed by the abuse done to himself by an Israelite. That was an affront to Israel in general, and touched the honour of his crown and kingdom; this was purely personal, and therefore (according to the usual disposition of good men) he could the easier forgive it. 2. They were adversaries to his interest: if he should put Shimei to death, who cursed him, they would expect the like treatment who had taken up arms, and actually levied war against him, which would drive them from him, while he was endeavouring to draw them to him. Acts of severity are seldom acts of policy: *The throne is established by mercy*. Shimei hereupon has his pardon signed and sealed with an oath; yet bound no doubt to his good behaviour, and liable to be prosecuted if he afterwards miscarried himself; and thus he was reserved to be, in due time, as much a monument of the justice of the government, as he was now of its clemency, and in both of its prudence.

24. ¶ And Mephibosheth the son of Saul came down to meet the king: and had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his cloaths, from the day the king departed, until the day he came again in peace. 25. And it came to pass when he was come to Jerusalem to meet the king, that the king said unto him, Wherefore wentest thou not with me, Mephibosheth? 26. And he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me; for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king, because thy servant is lame. 27. And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king; but my lord the king is as an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes. 28. For all of my father's house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table: what right therefore have I yet to cry any more unto the king? 29. And the king said unto him, Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, Thou and Ziba divide the land. 30. And Mephibosheth, said unto the king, Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.

The day of David's return was a day of bringing to remembrance, a day of account, in which what had passed in his flight was called over again, and among other things, after Shimei's, comes Mephibosheth's case to be enquired into, and he himself brings it on.

1. He went down in the crowd to meet the king, ver. 24. and as a proof of the sincerity of his joy in the king's return, we are here told what a true mourner he was for the king's banishment. During that melancholy time, when one of the greatest glories of Israel was departed, Mephibosheth continued in a very melancholy posture. He was never trimmed, nor put on clean linen, but wholly neglected himself as one abandoned to grief for the king's affliction and the kingdom's misery. In times of public calamity, we ought to abridge ourselves of the delights of sense, in conformity to the season. There are times when God calls to weeping and mourning, and we must comply with the call.

2. When the king came to Jerusalem, since he could no sooner have an opportunity of addressing himself to him, he made his appearance before him, ver. 25. And when the king asked him, why he being one of his family had stayed behind, and not accompanied him in his exile, he opened his case fully to the king. 1. He complains of Ziba, his servant, that should have been his friend, but had been two ways his enemy: for he had first hauled him of his purpose to go along with the king, and took the ass himself which he was ordered to make ready for his master, ver. 26. basely taking advantage of his lameness, and his inability to help himself, and then accused him to David of a design to usurp the government, ver. 27. What a great deal of mischief is it in the power of a wicked servant to do to the best master? 2. He gratefully acknowledgeth the king's great kindness to himself, when he and all his father's house lay at the king's mercy, ver. 28. when he might justly have been dealt with as a rebel, he was treated as a friend, as a child: *Thou didst set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table*. This shews Ziba's suggestion improbable: for could Mephibosheth be so foolish as to aim higher, when he lived so easily, so happily as he did? and could he be so very disingenuous as to design any ill to David, of whose great kindness to him he was thus sensible? 3. He refers himself to the king's pleasure, *Do what is good in thine eyes* with me and my estate; depending on the king's wisdom, and his ability to discern between truth and falsehood; *my lord the king is as an angel of God*; and disclaiming all pretensions of his own merit; so much kindness I have received above what I deserved, and what right have I to cry any more unto the king? Why should I trouble the king with my complaints, who have already been so trouble-

some

some to him? Why should I think any thing hard that is put upon me; who have hitherto been so kindly treated? We were all *as dead men before God*; ye! he has not only spared us, but *taken us to sit at his table*; what little reason then have we to complain of any trouble we are in! and what good reason to take all well that God doth!

3. David hereupon recalls the sequestration of Mephibosheth's estate; being deceived in his grant, he revokes it, and confirms his former settlement of it, *I have said, thou and Ziba divide the land*, ver. 29. i. e. let it be as I first ordered it, chap. ix. 10. the property shall still be vested in thee, but Ziba shall have the occupancy, he shall till the land, paying thee a rent. Thus Mephibosheth is where he was, no harm is done, only Ziba goes away unpunished, for his false and malicious information against his master, but David either feared him too much, or loved him too well, to do justice upon him according to that law, *Deut. xviii. 18, 19.* and he was now in the humour of forgiving, and resolved to make every body easy.

4. Mephibosheth drowns all his cares about his estate, in his joy for the king's return, ver. 30. *Ye let him take all*, the presence and favour of the king shall be to me instead of all. A good man can contentedly bear his own private losses and disappointments, while he sees Israel in peace, and the throne of the Son of David exalted and established. Ziba take all, so that David may be in peace.

31. ¶ And Barzillai the Gileadite came down from Rogelim, and went over Jordan with the king, to conduct him over Jordan. 32. Now Barzillai was a very aged man, *even fourscore years old*; and he had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim: for he was a very great man. 33. And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem. 34. And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? 35. I am this day fourscore years old: *and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat, or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing-men and singing-women: wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?* 36. Thy servant will go a little way over Jordan with the king: and why should the king recompense it me with such a reward? 37. Let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, *and be buried by the grave of my father, and of my mother: but behold thy servant Chimham, let him go over with my lord the king, and do to him what shall seem good unto thee.* 38. And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee: and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, *that will I do for thee.* 39. And all the people went over Jordan: and when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him: and he returned unto his own place.

David had already graced the triumphs of his restoration with the generous remission of the injuries that had been done him; we have him here gracing them with the no less generous reward of the kindnesses that had been shewn him. Barzillai, the Gileadite, who had a noble seat at Rogelim, not far from Mahanaim, was the man that of all the nobility and gentry of that country had been most kind to David in his distress. If Abialom had prevailed, it is likely he might have suffered for it, but now he and his shall be no losers by it.

Here is, 1. Barzillai's great respect to David, not only as a good man but as his rightful sovereign. He *provided him with sustenance*, for himself and his family, *while he lay at Mahanaim*, ver. 32. God had given him a large estate, *for he was a very great man*, and, it seems he had a large heart to do good with it, and what else but that is a large estate good for? To reduced greatness, generosity obligeth us, and to oppressed goodness, piety obligeth us to be in a particular manner kind to the utmost of our power. Barzillai, to shew that he was not weary of David, though he was so great a charge to him, attended him to Jordan, and went over with him, ver. 31. Let subjects learn hence, to render tribute to whom tribute is due, and honour to whom honour. Rom. xiii. 7.

2. The kind invitation David gave him to court, ver. 33. *Come thou over with me.* He invited him, 1. That he might have the pleasure of his company and the benefit of his counsel; for we may suppose he was very wise and good, as well as very rich, else he had not been called here a *very great man*; for it is what a man is, more than what he has, that speaks him truly great. 2. That he might have an opportunity of returning his kindnesses, *I will feed thee with me*, thou shalt fare as sumptuously as I fare, and this at Jerusalem, the royal and holy city. David did not take Barzillai's kindness to him as a due debt, he was none of those arbitrary princes, that think whatever their subjects have is theirs when they please, but accepted it and rewarded it as a favour. We must always study to be grateful to our friends, especially to those who have helped us in distress.

3. Barzillai's reply to this invitation: wherein, 1. He admires the king's generosity in making him this offer, lessening his service, and magnifying the king's return for it: *Why should the king recompense it with such a reward?* ver. 36. Will the master thank that servant who only doth what was his duty to do? He thought he had done himself honour enough in doing the king any service. Thus when the saints shall be called to inherit the kingdom, in consideration of what they have done for Christ in this world, they will be amazed at the disproportion between the service and the recompence, *Matt. xxv. 37. Lord, when saw we thee hungry and fed thee?*

2. He declines accepting the invitation, begs his majesty's pardon for refusing so generous an offer: he should think himself very happy in being near the king, but, 1. He is old, and unfit to remove at all, especially to court: old and unfit for the business of the court; *why should I go up with the king to Jerusalem?* I can do him no service there, either in council, or camp, in the treasury, or in the courts of justice; *for how long have I to live?* ver. 34. Shall I think of going into business, now I am going out of the world? Old and unfit for the diversions of the court, which will be ill bestowed, and even thrown away, upon one that can relish them so little, ver. 35. As it was in Moses's time, so it was in Barzillai's, and it is not worse now, that

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if men be so strong that they come to fourscore years, their strength then is labour and sorrow. Psalm xc. 10. these were then, and are still, years of which men say they have no pleasure in them, Eccl. xii. 1. Dainties are insipid when desire fails; and songs to the aged ear are little better than those sung to a heavy heart, very disagreeable; how should they choose, when the daughters of music are brought low? Let those that are old, learn of this good old gentleman to be dead to the delights of sense; let grace second nature, and make a virtue of the necessity. Nay, Barzillai, being old, thinks he shall be a burden to the king, rather than any credit to him; and a good man would not go any where to be burdensome, or, if he must be so, will rather be so to his own house than to another's. 2. He is dying, and must begin to think of his long journey, his removal out of the world for good and all, ver. 37. It is good for us all, but it especially becomes old people, to think and speak much of dying. Talk of going to court! saith Barzillai, let me go home and die in my own city, the place of my father's sepulchre; let me die by the grave of my father, that my bones may with a little ado be carried to the place of their rest. The grave is ready for me, let me go and get ready for it, go and die in my nest.

3. He desires the king to be kind to his son Chimham; *let him go over with my lord the king*; and have preferment at court; what favour is done to him, Barzillai will take as done to himself. They that are old must not grudge young people those delights, which they themselves are past the enjoyment of, nor oblige them to their retirements. Barzillai will go back himself, but he will not make Chimham go back with him, though he could ill be without him, yet, for his satisfaction and improvement, he is willing to spare him.

1. David's farewell to Barzillai. 1. He sends him back into his country with a kiss and a blessing, ver. 39. signifying, that in gratitude for his kindnesses he would love him and pray for him, and with a promise, that whatever request he should at any time make to him, he would be ready to oblige him, ver. 38. *Whatsoever thou shalt think of*, when thou comest home, to ask of me, *that will I do for thee.* What other excellency is there in power, but that it gives men a capacity of doing the more good? 2. He takes Chimham forward with him, and leaves it to Barzillai to choose him his preferment, *I will do to him what shall seem good unto thee*, ver. 38. And, it should seem, Barzillai, who had experienced the innocence and safety of retirement, begged a country-seat for him near Jerusalem, but not in it, for long after we read of a place near Beth-le-hem, David's city, which is called, the habitation of Chimham, probably allotted him not out of the crown lands, or the forfeited estates, but David's paternal estate.

40. Then the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him: and all the people of Judah conducted the king, and also half the people of Israel. 41. ¶ And, behold, all the men of Israel, came to the king, and said unto the king, Why have our brethren the men of Judah, stolen thee away, and have brought the king and his household, and all David's men with him over Jordan? 42. And all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, Because the king is near of kin to us: wherefore then be ye angry for this matter? have we eaten at all of the king's cost? or hath he given us any gift? 43. And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, We have ten parts in the king, and we have also more right in David than ye: why then did ye despise us that our advice should not be first had in bringing back our king? And the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel.

David came over Jordan attended and assisted by the men of Judah, but by that time he was advanced as far as Gilgal, the first stage on this side Jordan, half the people of Israel, i. e. of their elders and great men, were come to wait upon him, to kiss his hand, and congratulate his return, but found they came too late to the solemnity of his first entrance. This put them out of humour, and occasioned a quarrel between them and the men of Judah, which was a damp to the joy of the day, and the beginning of farther mischief.

Here is, 1. The complaint which the men of Israel brought to the king against the men of Judah, ver. 41. that they had performed the ceremony of bringing the king over Jordan, and not given them notice, that they might have come to join in it. This reflected upon them, as if they were not so well affected to the king and his restoration as the men of Judah were, whereas the king himself knew they had spoke of it, before the men of Judah thought of it, ver. 11. It seemed likewise as if they intended to monopolize the king's favours when he was come back, and to be looked upon as his only friends. See what mischief comes from pride and jealousy.

3. The excuse which the men of Judah made for themselves, ver. 42. 1. They plead relation to the king; *he is near of kin to us*, and therefore in a matter of mere ceremony, as this was, we may claim precedence. It was into our country that he was to be brought, and therefore who so fit as we to bring him? 2. They deny the insinuated charge of self-seeking in what they had done. *Have we eaten at all of the king's cost?* No, we have all borne our own charges. *Hath he given us any gift?* No, we have no design to engross the advantages of his return, you are come time enough to share in them. Too many that attend princes, do it only for what they can get.

3. The men of Israel's vindication of their charge, ver. 43. They pleaded, *we have ten parts in the king*, (Judah having Simeon only, whose lot lay within his, to join with him) and therefore it is a slight upon us; that our advice was not asked about bringing back the king. See how uncertain the multitude is; they were lately striving against the king, to drive him out; now they are striving about him, which shall honour him most; a good man and a good cause will thus recover their credit and interest, though for a time they may seem to have lost it. See what is commonly the original of strife, nothing so much as impatience of contempt, or the least seeming slight. The men of Judah had done better, if they had taken their brethren's advice and assistance, but since they did not, why should the men of Israel take it so heinously? If a good work be done, and well done, let us not be displeased, nor the work disparaged, though we had no hand in it.

Lastly, The scripture takes notice, by way of blame, which of the contending parties managed the cause with most passion: *The words of the men of Judah were fiercer than those of the men of Israel.* Though we have right and reason on our side, if we speak it with fierceness, God takes notice of it, and is much displeased with it.

C H A P. XX.

How do the clouds return after the rain! No sooner is one of David's troubles over, but another arises as it were out of the ashes of the former, wherein the threatening is fulfilled, that the sword should never depart from his house. 1. Before he reaches Jerusalem a new rebellion is raised by Sheba, ver. 1, 2. 2. His first work, when he comes to Jerusalem, is to condemn his concubines to perpetual imprisonment, ver. 3. 3. Amasa, whom he intrusts to raise an army against Sheba, is too slow in his motions, which puts him into a fright, ver. 4—6. 4. One of his generals barbarously murders the other, when they were taking the field, ver. 7—13. 5. Sheba is at length shut up in the city of Abel, ver. 14, 15. but the citizens delivered him up to Joab, and so his rebellion was crushed, ver. 16—21. The chapter concludes with a short account of David's great officers, ver. 23—26.

1. **A**ND there happened to be there a man of Belial, whose name was Sheba the son of Bichri, a Benjamite, and he blew a trumpet, and said, We have no part in David, neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel. 2. So every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba the son of Bichri: but the men of Judah clave unto their king, from Jordan even to Jerusalem. 3. ¶ And David came to his house at Jerusalem: and the king took the ten women his concubines, whom he had left to keep the house, and put them in ward, and fed them, but went not in unto them: so they were shut up unto the day of their death, living in widowhood.

David in the midst of his triumphs, hath here the affliction to see his kingdom disturbed, and his family disgraced.

1. His subjects revolting from him at the instigation of a man of Belial, whom they followed when they forsook the man after God's own heart. Observe. 1. That this happened immediately upon the crushing of Absalom's rebellion. We must not think it strange, while we are here in this world, if the end of one trouble be the beginning of another: deep sometimes calls unto deep. 2. That the people were now just returning to their allegiance, when of a sudden they flew off from it. When a reconciliation is newly made, it ought to be handled with great tenderness and caution, lest the peace break again before it be settled. A broken bone, when it is set, must have time to knit. 3. That the ring-leader of this rebellion was Sheba, a Benjamite by birth, ver. 1. but had his habitation in mount Ephraim, ver. 21. Shimei and he were both of Saul's tribe, and both retained the ancient grudge of that house. Against the kingdom of the Messiah there is an hereditary enmity in the serpent's seed, and a succession of attempts to overthrow it, *Psalm* ii. 1, 2. but he that sits in heaven laughs at them all. 4. That the occasion of it was that foolish quarrel, which we read of in the close of the foregoing chapter, between the elders of Israel and the elders of Judah, about bringing the king back. It was a point of honour that was disputed between them, which had most interest in David; and we are more numerous, say the elders of Israel; we are nearer akin to him, say the elders of Judah. Now one would think David very safe and happy, when his subjects are striving which shall love him best and be most forward to shew him respect, yet even that strife proves the occasion of a rebellion. The men of Israel complained to David of the slight which the men of Judah had put upon them; if he had now countenanced their complaint, commended their zeal, and returned them thanks for it, he might have confirmed them in his interest; but he seemed partial to his own tribe: *their words prevailed above the words of the men of Israel*; as some read the last words of the foregoing chapter: David inclined to justify them; which when the men of Israel perceived, they flew off with indignation; if the king will suffer himself to be engrossed by the men of Judah, let him and them make the best of one another, and we will set up one for ourselves. We thought we had had ten parts in David, but that will not be allowed us, the men of Judah tell us, in effect, *we have no part in him*, and therefore we will have none, nor will we attend him any farther in his return to Jerusalem, nor own him for our king. This Sheba proclaimed, ver. 1. who probably was a man of note, and had been active in Absalom's rebellion; the disgusted Israelites took the hint and went up from after David, to follow Sheba, ver. 2. i. e. the generality of them did so, only the men of Judah stuck to him.

Learn hence. 1. That it is as impolitic for princes to be partial in their respects to their subjects, as it is for parents to be so to their children; both should carry it with an even hand. 2. Those know not what they do that make light of the affections of their inferiors, or that are wanting to countenance and accept them. Their hatred may be feared, whose love is despised. 4. The beginning of strife is as the letting forth of water; it is therefore wisdom to leave it off before it be meddled with, *Prov.* xvii. 14. How great a matter doth a little of this fire kindle! 4. The perverting of words is the subverting of peace; and a deal of mischief is made by forcing invidious constructions upon what is said and written, and drawing consequences that were never intended. The men of Judah said, *The king is near of kin to us*, by which, say the men of Israel, you mean, *we have no part in him*; whereas they meant no such thing. 5. People are very apt to run into extremes, *We have ten parts in David*, said they; and almost in the next breath, *we have no part in him*. To-day Hosanna, to-morrow Crucify.

2. His concubines shut up and imprisoned for life, and he himself under a necessity of doing it, because they had been defiled by Absalom, ver. 3. David had multiplied wives contrary to the law, and they proved a grief and shame to him. Those whom he had sinfully taken pleasure in, he was now, 1. Obligated in duty to put away, they being rendered unclean to him, by the vile uncleanness his son had committed with them. They whom he had loved, must now be loathed. 2. Obligated in prudence to shut up in privacy, not be seen abroad for shame, lest the sight of them should give occasion to people to speak of what Absalom had done to them, which ought not to be so much as named, *1 Cor.* v. 1. that that villainy might be buried in oblivion, they must be buried in obscurity. 3. Obligated in justice to shut up in prison, to punish them for their easy submission to Absalom's lust, despairing perhaps of David's return, and giving him up for gone. Let none expect to do ill, and fare well.

4. ¶ Then said the king to Amasa, Assemble me the men of Judah within three days, and be thou here pre-

sent. 5. So Amasa went to assemble the men of Judah; but he tarried longer than the set time which he had appointed him. 6. And David said to Abishai, Now shall Sheba the son of Bichri do us more harm than did Absalom: take thou thy lord's servants and pursue after him, lest he get him fenced cities, and escape us. 7. And there went out after him Joab's men, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and all the mighty men: and they went out of Jerusalem, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri. 8. When they were at the great stone which is in Gibeon, Amasa went before them: and Joab's garment that he had put on was girded unto him, and upon it a girdle with a sword fastened upon his loins in the sheath thereof, and as he went forth it fell out. 9. And Joab said to Amasa, Art thou in health, my brother? And Joab took Amasa by the beard with the right hand to kiss him. 10. But Amasa took no heed to the sword that was in Joab's hand: so he smote him therewith in the fifth rib, and shed out his bowels to the ground, and struck him not again, and he died: So Joab and Abishai his brother pursued after Sheba the son of Bichri. 11. And one of Joab's men stood by him, and said, He that favoureth Joab, and he that is for David let him go after Joab. 12. And Amasa wallowed in blood in the midst of the highway: and when the man saw that all the people stood still, he removed Amasa out of the highway into the field, and cast a cloth upon him, when he saw that every one that came by him, stood still. 13. When he was removed out of the highway, all the people went on after Joab, to pursue after Sheba the son of Bichri.

We have here Amasa's fall, just as he began to rise. He was nephew to David, *chap.* xvii. 23. had been Absalom's general, and commander in chief of his rebellious army: But that being routed, he came over into David's interest, upon a promise that he should be general of his forces instead of Joab. Sheba's rebellion gives David an occasion to make good that promise sooner than he could wish, but Joab's envy and emulation made it of ill consequence both to him and David.

1. Amasa has a commission to raise forces for the suppressing of Sheba's rebellion, and is ordered to do it with all possible expedition, ver. 4. It seems the men of Judah, though forward to attend the king's triumphs, were backward enough to fight his battles, else, when they were all in a body waiting upon him to Jerusalem, they might immediately have pursued Sheba, and have crushed that cockatrice in the egg, but most love a loyalty, as well as a religion, that is cheap and easy. Many boast of their being akin to Christ, that yet are very loth to venture for him. Amasa is sent to assemble the men of Judah within three days; but he finds them so backward and unready, that he cannot do it within the time appointed, ver. 5. though the preferring Amasa, who had been their general under Absalom, was very obliging, and a proof of the clemency of David's government.

2. Upon Amasa's delay, Abishai, the brother of Joab, is ordered to take the guards and standing forces, and with them to pursue Sheba, ver. 6, 7. for nothing could be of more dangerous consequence than to give him time. David gives these orders to Abishai, because he resolves to mortify Joab, and degrade him, not so much I doubt for the blood of Abner, which he had shed basely, as for the blood of Absalom which he had shed justly and honourably. "Now (saith Bishop Hall) Joab smarteth for a loyal disobedience. How slippery are the stations of earthly honours, and subject to continual mutability! Happy are they who are in favour with him in whom there is no shadow of change." Joab, without orders, though in disgrace, goes along with his brother, knowing he might be serviceable to the public, or perhaps now meditating the removal of his rival.

3. Joab, near Gibeon, meets with Amasa, and barbarously murders him, ver. 8—10. It should seem, the great stone in Gibeon was the place appointed for the general rendezvous, there the rivals met; and Amasa, relying upon his commission, went before as general both of the new-raised forces which he had got together, and of the veteran troops which Abishai had brought in; but Joab there took an opportunity to kill him with his own hand; and, 1. He did it subtilly, and with contrivance, and not upon a sudden provocation. He girds his coat about him, that that might not hang in his way, and girt his belt upon his coat, that his sword might be the readier to him; he puts his sword in a sheath too big for it, that whenever he pleased, it might upon a little shake fall out, as if it fell by accident, and so he might take it into his hand unsuspected, as if he were going to return it into the scabbard, when he designed to sheath it in the bowels of Amasa. The more there is of plot in a sin, the worse it is. 2. He did it treacherously, and under pretence of friendship, that Amasa might not be upon his guard. He called him brother, for they were own cousins, enquired of his welfare, *Art thou in health?* took him by the beard as one he was free with, to kiss him, while with the drawn sword in his other hand he was aiming at his heart. Was this done like a gentleman, like a soldier, like a general? No, but like a villain, like a base coward. Just thus he slew Abner, and went unpunished for it, which encouraged him to do the like again. 3. He did it impudently, not in a corner, but at the head of his troops, and in their sight, as one that was neither ashamed nor afraid to do it; that was so hardened in blood and murders, that he could neither blush nor tremble. 4. He did it at one blow, gave the fatal push with a good will, as we say, so that he needed not strike him again; with such a strong and steady hand he gave this one stroke that it did his business. 5. He did it in contempt and defiance of David, and the commission he had given to Amasa; for that commission was the only ground of his quarrel with him, so that David was struck at through the side of Amasa; and was in effect, told to his face, that Joab would be general in spite of him. 6. He did it very unseasonably, when they were going against a common enemy, and were concerned to be unanimous. This ill-timed quarrel might have scattered their forces, or engaged them one against another, and so have made them all an easy prey to Sheba. So contentedly could Joab sacrifice the interest both of king and kingdom to his personal revenge.

4. Joab immediately resumes the general's place, and takes care to lead the army on in pursuit of Sheba, that if possible he might prevent any prejudice to the common cause by what he had done. 1. He leaves one of his men

men to make proclamation to his forces that were coming up; that they were still engaged in David's cause, but under Joab's command, *ver.* 11. He knew what an interest he had in the soldiery, and how many favoured him, rather than Amasa that had been a traitor, was now a turn-coat, and had never been successful; on this he boldly relied, and called them all to follow him. What man of Judah would not be for his old king, and his old general? But one would wonder with what face a murderer could pursue a traitor: and how under such a heavy load of guilt he had courage to enter upon danger; his conscience sure was seared with a hot iron. 2. Care is taken to remove the dead body out of the way, because at that they made a stand, (*as chap.* ii. 23.) and to cover it with a cloth, *ver.* 12, 13. Wicked men think themselves safe in their wickedness, if they can but conceal it from the eye of the world: if it be hid, it is with them as it were never done. But the covering of blood with a cloth, cannot stop its cry in God's ear for vengeance, or make it the less loud. However, since this was no time to arraign Joab for what he had done; and the common safety called for expedition, it was prudently done to remove that which retarded the march of the army; and then they all went on after Joab, while David, who no doubt had notice soon brought him of this tragedy, could not but reflect upon it with regret, that he had not formerly done justice on Joab for the death of Abner; and that he had now exposed Amasa by preferring him: And perhaps, his conscience minded him of his employing Joab in the murder of Uriah, which had helped to harden him in cruelty.

14. ¶ And he went through all the tribes of Israel unto Abel, and to Beth-maachah, and all the Berites: and they were gathered together, and went also after him. 15. And they came and besieged him in Abel of Beth-maachah, and they cast up a bank against the city, and it stood in the trench: and all the people that were with Joab battered the wall, to throw it down. 16. ¶ Then cried a wise woman out of the city, Hear, hear; say, I pray you, unto Joab, Come near hither that I may speak with thee. 17. And when he was come near unto her, the woman said, Art thou Joab? And he answered, I am he. Then she said unto him, Hear the words of thine hand-maid. And he answered, I do hear. 18. Then she spake, saying, They were wont to speak in old time, saying, They shall surely ask counsel at Abel: and so they ended the matter. 19. I am one of them that are peaceable and faithful in Israel: thou seekest to destroy a city, and a mother in Israel: why wilt thou swallow up the inheritance of the LORD? 20. And Joab answered and said, Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy. 21. The matter is not so: but a man of mount Ephraim (Sheba the son of Bichri by name) hath lift up his hand against the king, even against David: deliver him only and I will depart from the city. And the woman said unto Joab, Behold, his head shall be thrown to thee over the wall. 22. Then the woman went unto all the people in her wisdom, and they cut off the head of Sheba, the son of Bichri, and cast it out to Joab: and he blew a trumpet, and they retired from the city, every man to his tent: and Joab returned to Jerusalem unto the king.

We have here the conclusion of Sheba's attempt.

1. The rebel when he had rambled over all the tribes of Israel, and found them not so willing, upon second thoughts, to follow him, as they had been upon a sudden provocation to desert David, but had only picked up some few like himself that sided with him, nestled at length in Abel Beth-maachah, a strong city of the north, in the lot of Naphtali, where we find it placed, 2 Kings xvi. 29. Here he took shelter, whether by force or with consent doth not appear; but his adherents were mostly Beerites of Beeroth in Benjamin, *ver.* 14. One ill man will find or make more.

2. Joab drew up all his force against the city, besieged it, battered the wall, and made it almost ready for a general storm, *ver.* 15. Justly is that place attacked with all this fury which dares harbour a traitor; nor will that heart fare better which indulgeth those rebellious lusts, that will not have Christ to reign over them.

3. A discreet good woman of the city of Abel, brings this matter, by her prudent management, to a good issue, so as to satisfy Joab, and yet save the city. Here is,

1. Her treaty with Joab, and her capitulation with him, by which he is engaged to raise the siege, upon condition that Sheba be delivered up. It seems none of all the men of Abel, none of the elders or magistrates, offered to treat with Joab, no, not when they were reduced to the last extremity; either they were stupid and unconcerned for the public safety, or they stood in awe of Sheba, or they despaired of gaining any good terms with Joab, or they had not wit enough to manage the treaty: But this one woman with her wisdom saved the city: Souls know no differences of Sexes; though the man be the head, it doth not therefore follow that he has the monopoly of the brains, and therefore ought not by any falique law to have the monopoly of the crown; many a masculine heart and more than masculine has been found in a female breast; nor is the treasure of wisdom the less valuable for being lodged in the weaker vessel.

In this treaty between this nameless heroine and Joab.

1. She gains his audience and attention, *ver.* 16, 17. and we may suppose it was the first time he had ever treated with a woman in martial affairs.

2. She reasons with him on behalf of her city, and very ingeniously. 1. That it was a city famous for wisdom, *ver.* 18. as we translate it, she pleads that this city had long been in such reputation for prudent knowing men, that it was the common referee of the country, and all agreed to abide by the award of its elders. Their sentence was an oracle, let them be consulted and the matter is ended, all sides will acquiesce. Now, shall such a city as this be laid in ashes, and never treated with? 2. That the inhabitants were generally peaceable and faithful in Israel, *ver.* 9. She could speak not for herself only, but for all those whose cause she pleaded, that they were not of turbulent seditious spirits, but of known fidelity to their prince, and peaceableness with their fellow subjects: neither seditious,

not litigious. 3. That it was a mother in Israel, a guide and nurse to the towns and country about; and that it was a part of the inheritance of the Lord, a city of Israelites, not of heathen; and the destruction of it would lessen and weaken that nation, which God had chosen for his heritage. 4. That they expected him to offer them peace, before he made an attack upon them, according to that known law of war, *Deut.* xx. 10. So the margin reads, *ver.* 18. they plainly spake in the beginning (*viz.* of the siege) saying, surely they will ask of Abel, *i. e.* The besiegers will demand the traitor, and will ask us to surrender him, and if they do we will soon come to an agreement, and so end the matter. Thus she tacitly upbraids Joab for not offering them peace, but hopes it is not too late to beg it.

2. Joab and Abel's advocate soon agree the matter, that Sheba's head shall be the ransom of the city. Joab, though in a personal quarrel he had lately swallowed up and destroyed Amasa, yet when he acts as a general, will by no means bear the imputation, *Far be it from me that I should delight to swallow up or destroy*, or design it, but when it is necessary for the public safety, *ver.* 20. The matter is not so, our quarrel is not with your city, we would hazard our lives for its protection; our quarrel is only with the traitor that is harboured among you; deliver him up and we have done. A great deal of mischief would be prevented, if contending parties would but understand one another. The city obstinately holds out, believing Joab aims at its ruin; Joab furiously attacks it; believing the citizens all confederates with Sheba; whereas it is neither so nor so; let both sides be undeceived, and the matter is soon accommodated. The single condition of peace is the surrender of the traitor, so it is in God's dealing with the soul, when it is besieged by convictions and distresses; sin is the traitor; the beloved lust is the rebel: part with that, cast away the transgressions, and all shall be well. No peace on any other terms. Our wise woman immediately agrees to the proposal: *Behold his head shall be thrown to thee presently.*

2. Her treaty with the citizens. She went to them in her wisdom, (and perhaps, she had as much need of it in dealing with them, as in dealing with Joab) and persuaded them to cut off Sheba's head, probably by some public order of their government, and it was thrown over the wall to Joab: He knew the traitor's face, and therefore looked no farther, intending that not any of his adherents should suffer. The public safety was secured, and then no matter for gratifying the public revenge. Joab hereupon raised the siege, and marched back to Jerusalem, with the trophies rather of peace than victory.

23. ¶ Now Joab was over all the host of Israel: and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites, and over the Pelethites: 24. And Adoram was over the tribute: and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, was recorder: 25. And Sheva was scribe: and Zadok and Abiathar were the priests: 26. And Ira also the Jairite was a chief ruler about David.

Here is an account of the state of David's court after his restoration. Joab was continued general, being too big to be displaced. Benaiah, as before, captain of the guards. Here is one new office erected, which he had not, *chap.* viii. 16. that of the treasurer, or one over the tribute, for it was not till towards the latter end of his time that he began to raise taxes. Adoram was long in this office, but it cost him his life at last, 1 Kings xii. 18.

C H A P. XXI.

The date of the events of this chapter is uncertain. I incline to think that they happened as they are here placed, after Absalom's and Sheba's rebellion, and towards the latter end of David's reign. That the battles with the Philistines mentioned here, were long after the Philistines were subdued, appears by comparing 1 Chron. xviii. 1. with *chap.* xx. 4. The numbering of the people was just before the fixing of the place of the temple, as appears, 1 Chron. xxii. 1. and that was towards the close of David's life, and it should seem the people were numbered just after the three years famine for the Gibeonites; for that which is threatened as three years famine, 1 Chron. xxi. 12. is called seven years, 2 Sam. xxiv. 12, 13. Three more with the year current, added to those three. We have here, 1. The Gibeonites revenged, (1.) By a famine in the land, *ver.* 1. By the putting of seven of Saul's posterity to death, *ver.* 2—9. and of the care that was taken of their dead bodies, and of the bones of Saul, *ver.* 10—14. (2.) The giants of the Philistines slain in several battles, *ver.* 15—22.

1. **T**HEN there was a famine in the days of David, three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites. 2. And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them, (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites, and the children of Israel had sworn unto them; and Saul sought to slay them, in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.) 3. Wherefore David said unto the Gibeonites. What shall I do for you? and wherewith shall I make the atonement, that ye may bless the inheritance of the LORD? 4. And the Gibeonites said unto him, We will have no silver nor gold of Saul, nor of his house, neither for us shalt thou kill any man in Israel. And he said, What ye shall say, that will I do for you. 5. And they answered the king, The man that consumed us, and that devised against us, that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel, 6. Let seven men of his sons be delivered unto us, and we will hang them up unto the LORD in Gibeah of Saul, whom the LORD did choose. And the king said, I will give them. 7. But the king spared Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan the son of Saul because

cause of the LORD's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul. 8. But the king took the two sons of Rizpah the daughter of Aiah whom the bare unto Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth, and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite, 9. And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites; and they hanged them in the hill before the LORD: and they fell *all* seven together, and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest.

Here, 1. We are told of the injury which Saul had long before this done to the Gibeonites, which we had no account of in the history of his reign, nor had heard of here, but that it came now to be reckoned for. The Gibeonites were of the remnant of the Amorites, *ver. 2.* who by a wife had made peace with Israel, and had the public faith pawned to them by Joshua for their safety; we had the story, *Josh. ix.* where it was agreed, *ver. 23.* that they should be secured of their lives, but deprived of their lands and liberties, that they and theirs should be tenants in villainage to Israel. It doth not appear that they had broke their part of the covenant, either by denying their service, or attempting to recover their lands or liberties, nor was it pretended; but Saul, under colour of zeal for the honour of Israel, that it might not be said they had any of the natives among them, aimed to root them out, and in order to shew that slew many of them. Thus he would seem wiser than his predecessors the judges, and more zealous for the public interest: And perhaps designed it for an instance of his royal prerogative, and the power which as king he assumed to rescind the former acts of government, and to disannul the most solemn leagues. It may be, he designed by this severity towards the Gibeonites to atone for his clemency towards the Amalekites. Some conjecture that he sought to cut off the Gibeonites at the same time when he put away the witches, *1 Sam. xxviii. 3.* or perhaps many of them were remarkably pious, and he sought to destroy them when he slew the priests their masters. That which made this an exceeding sinful sin was, that he not only shed innocent blood, but therein violated the solemn oath, by which the nation was bound to protect them. See what brought ruin upon Saul's house, it was a bloody house.

2. We find the nation of Israel chastised with a fore famine long after, for this sin of Saul. Observe, (1.) Even in the land of Israel, that fruitful land, and in the reign of David, that glorious reign, there was a famine, not extreme, for then it would sooner have been taken notice of, and enquiry made into the cause of it, but great drought, and scarcity of provisions, the consequence of it, for three years together. If corn miss one year, commonly the next will make up the deficiency, but if it miss three years successively, it will be a fore judgment; and the man of wisdom will by it hear God's voice crying to the country, to repent of the abuse of plenty. 2. David enquired of God concerning it. Though he was himself a prophet, he must consult the oracle, and know God's mind in his own appointed way. Note, When we are under God's judgments, we ought to enquire into the grounds of the controversy. *Lord, shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.* It is strange David did not sooner consult the oracle, not till the third year; but, perhaps, till then he apprehended it not to be an extraordinary judgment for some particular sin. And even good men are often slack and remiss in doing their duty. We continue in ignorance and under mistake, because we delay to enquire. 3. God was ready in his answer, though David was slow in his enquiries, *It is for Saul.* Note, God's judgment often look a great way back, which obligeth us to do so when we are under his rebukes. It is not for us to object against the people's smarting for the sin of their king, perhaps they were aiding and abetting; nor against this generation's suffering for the sin of the last, God often visiteth the sins of the fathers upon the children, and his judgments are a great deep: He giveth not account of any of his matters. Time doth not wear out the guilt of sin: nor can we build hopes of impunity upon the delay of judgments. There is no statute of limitation to be pleaded against God's demands *Nullum tempus occurrit Deo.*

3. We have vengeance taken upon the house of Saul, for the turning away of God's wrath from the land, which at present smarted for his sin,

1. David, it is probable by divine direction, referred it to the Gibeonites themselves to prescribe what satisfaction should be given them for the wrong that had been done them, *ver. 5.* They had many years remained silent, and had not appealed to David, nor given the kingdom any disturbance with their complaints or demands; and now at length God speaks for them, *I heard not, for thou wilt hear, Psalm xxxviii. 14, 15:* and they are recompensed for their patience with this honour, that they are made judges in their own case, and have a blank given them to write their demands on, *What you shall say, that will I do, ver. 4.* that atonement may be made, and that ye may bless the inheritance of the Lord, *ver. 3.* It is sad for any family or nation to have the prayers of oppressed innocency against them, and therefore the expence of a just restitution is well bestowed for the retrieving of the blessing of those that were ready to perish, *Job xxix. 13.* My servant Job whom you have wronged shall pray for you, (saith God) and then I will be reconciled to you, and not till then. Those understand not themselves, that value not the prayers of the poor and despised.

2. They desired that seven of Saul's posterity might be put to death, and David granted them their demand.

1. They required no silver nor gold, *ver. 4.* Note, money is not satisfaction for blood, see *Numb. xxxv. 31, 32, 33.* It is the ancient law, blood calls for blood, *Gen. ix. 6.* and those over-value money, and under-value life, that sell the blood of their relations for corruptible things, *such as silver and gold.* The Gibeonites had now a fair opportunity to get a discharge from their servitude, in compensation for the wrong done them, according to the equity of the law, *Exod. xxi. 16.* If a man strike out his servant's eye, he shall let him go free for his eye's sake. But they did not insist on this neither; though the covenant was broke on the other side, it should not be broke on theirs: They were Nethinim, given to God and his people Israel, and they would seem weary of the service.

2. They required no lives but of Saul's family; he had done them the wrong, and therefore his children must pay for it. We sue the heirs for the parents debts; men may not extend that so far as life, *Deut. xxiv. 16.* The children in an ordinary course of law shall never be put to death for their parents, but this case of the Gibeonites was altogether extraordinary: God had made himself an immediate party to the cause, and no doubt put it into the heart of the Gibeonites to make this demand, for he owned what was done, *ver. 14.* and his judgments are not subject to the rules which men's judgments must be subject to. Let parents take heed of sin, especially the sin of cruelty and oppression, for their poor children's sake, who may be smarting for it by the just hand of God, when they are in their graves. Guilt and a curse are a bad entail upon a family. It should seem Saul's pos-

terity trod in his steps, for it is called a bloody house, it was the spirit of the family, and therefore they are justly reckoned with for his sin as well as their own.

3. They would not impose upon David to do this execution, *Thou shalt not kill for us any man, ver. 4.* But we will do it ourselves, *we will hang them up unto the Lord, ver. 5.* that if there were any hardship in it, they might bear the blame, and not David or his house. By our old law, if a murderer had judgment given against him upon an appeal, the relations that appealed had the executing of him.

4. They did not require this from any principle of malice against Saul or his family, had they been revengeful, they would have moved it themselves long before, but from a principle of love to the people of Israel, whom they saw plagued for the injury done to them. *We will hang them up unto the Lord, ver. 6.* to satisfy his justice, not to gratify any revenge of our own; for the good of the public, not for own reputation.

5. The nomination of the persons they left to David; who took care to secure Mephibosheth for Jonathan's sake, that while he was avenging the breach of one oath, he might not himself break another, *ver. 7.* but he delivered up two of Saul's sons which he had by a concubine of his, and five of his grandsons, whom his daughter Merab bore to Adriel, *1 Sam. xviii. 19.* but his daughter Michal brought up, *ver. 8.* now Saul's treachery was punished in giving Merab to Adriel when he had promised her to David, with a design to provoke him. "It is a dangerous matter (saith Bishop Hall upon this) to offer injury to any of God's faithful ones: if their meekness have easily remitted it, their God will not pass it over without a severe retribution; though it may be long first."

6. The place, time, and manner of their execution, all added to the solemnity of their being sacrificed to divine justice. 1. They were hanged up as Anathemas, under a peculiar mark of God's displeasure, for the law hath said, *he that is hanged is accursed of God, Deut. xxi. 23. Gal. iii. 13.* Christ being made a curse for us, and dying to satisfy for our sins, and to turn away the wrath of God, became obedient to the ignominious death. 2. They were hanged up in Gibeah of Saul, *ver. 6.* to shew that it was for his sin that they died. They were hanged as it were before their own door, to expatiate the guilt of the house of Saul; and thus God accomplished the ruin of that family, for the blood of the priests, and their families, which doubtless, now came in remembrance before God, and inquisition was made for it, *Psalm ix. 12.* Yet the blood of the Gibeonites is only mentioned, because that was shed in violation of a sacred oath, which though sworn long before, though obtained by a wife, and the promise made to Canaanites, yet is thus severely reckoned for: The despising of the oath, and breaking the covenant, will be recompensed on the head of those who thus profane God's sacred name, *Ezek. xvii. 18, 19.* And thus God would shew, that with him rich and poor meet together: Even royal blood must go to atone for the blood of the Gibeonites, who were but the vassals of the congregation. 3. They were put to death in the days of harvest, *ver. 9.* at the beginning of harvest, *ver. 10.* to shew that they were thus sacrificed for the turning away of that wrath of God, which had withheld from them their harvest mercies for some years past, and to obtain his favour in the present harvest. Thus there is no way of appeasing God's anger, but by mortifying and crucifying our lusts and corruptions. In vain do we expect mercy from God, unless we do justice upon our sins. Those executions must not be complained of as cruel, which are become necessary to the public welfare. Better that seven of Saul's bloody house be hanged than all Israel be famished.

10. ¶ And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest, until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night. 11. And it was told David what Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, the concubine of Saul, had done. 12. And David went and took the bones of Saul, and the bones of Jonathan his son, from the men of Jabesh-gilead, which had stolen them from the street of Bethshan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa. 13. And he brought up from thence the bones of Saul, and the bones of Jonathan his son: and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged. 14. And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded; and after that God was intreated for the land.

Here is, 1. Saul's sons not only hanged, but hanged in chains, their dead bodies left hanging; and exposed till the judgment ceased, which their death was to turn away, by the sending of rain upon the land. They died as sacrifices; and thus they were in a manner offered up, not consumed at once by fire, but gradually by the air. They died as Anathemas, and by this ignominious usage they were represented as execrable, because iniquity was laid upon them. When our blessed Saviour was made sin for us, he was made a curse for us. But how shall we reconcile this with the law, which expressly obliged to bury those that were hanged the same day? *Deut. xxi. 23.* One of the Jewish Rabbins wished this passage of story were expunged; that the name of God might be sanctified, which he thinks is dishonoured by his acceptance of that which was a violation of his law; but this was an extraordinary case, and did not fall within that law; nay the very reason for that law is a reason for this exception: He that is thus left hanging is accursed, therefore ordinary malefactors must not be so abused; but therefore these must; because they were sacrificed not to the justice of the nation, but for the crime of the nation, no less a crime than the violating of the public faith, and for the deliverance of the nation from no less a judgment than a general famine. Being thus made as the scourging of all things they were made *specacles to the world, 1 Cor. iv. 9—13.* God appointing, or at least allowing it.

2. Their dead bodies watched by Rizpah, the mother of two of them, *ver. 10.* It was a great affliction to her now in her old age to see her sons, whom we may suppose had been a comfort to her, and were likely to be the support of her declining years, cut off both of them in this dreadful manner. None know what sorrows they are reserved for. She may not see them decently interred, but they shall be decently attended. She attempts not to violate the sentence passed upon them, that they should hang there till God sent rain; neither steals nor forces away their dead bodies, though the divine law might have been vouched to bear her out; but patiently submits, pitches a tent of sackcloth near the gibbets, where, with her servants and

and friends, she protected the dead bodies from birds and beasts of prey. Thus she did, 1. Indulge her grief, as passionate mourners are apt to do, to no good purpose. When sorrow in such cases is in danger of growing excessive, we should rather study how to divert and pacify it, than how to humour and gratify it. Why should we thus harden ourselves in sorrow? 2. Testify her love. Thus she let the world know that her sons died not for any sin of their own, not as stubborn and rebellious sons, whose eye had despised to obey their mother, if that had been the case, she would have suffered the *ravens of the valley to pick it out, and the young eagles to eat it*, Prov. xxx. 17. But they died for their father's sin, and therefore her mind could not be alienated from them by their hard fate. Though there is no remedy but they must die, yet they shall die, pitied and lamented.

3. The solemn interment of their dead bodies, with the bones of Saul and Jonathan, in the burying-place of their family. David was so far from being displeased at what Rizpah had done, that he was himself stirred up by it to do honour to the house of Saul, and to these branches of it, among the rest, that it might appear it was not out of any personal disgust to the family that he delivered them up, and that he had not desired the woeful day, but he was obliged to do it for the public good. 1. He now bethought himself of removing the bodies of Saul and Jonathan from the place where the men of Jabesh-gilead had decently, but privately and obscurely, interred them *under a tree*, 1 Sam. xxxi. 12, 13. Though the shield of Saul was vilely cast away, as if he had not been anointed with oil, yet let not royal dust be lost in the graves of the common people. Humanity obliges thus to respect human bodies, especially of the great and good, in consideration both of what they had been, and what they are to be. With them he buried the bodies of them that were hanged; for when God's anger was turned away, they were no longer to be looked upon as a curse, ver. 13, 14. When *water dropped upon them out of heaven*, ver. 10, i. e. when God sent rain to water the earth, (which perhaps was not many days after they were hung up) then they were taken down, for then it appeared that *God was intreated for the land*. When justice is done on earth, vengeance from heaven ceaseth. Through Christ, who was hanged on a tree, and so made a curse for us, to expiate our guilt, though he was himself guiltless, God is pacified, and is intreated for us; and it is said, *Acts xiii. 29. that when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, in token of that, and of God's acceptance of it, they took him down and laid him in a sepulchre*.

15. ¶ Moreover the Philistines had yet war again with Israel; and David went down, and his servants with him, and fought against the Philistines; and David waxed faint. 16. And Ishbi-benob, which was of the sons of the giant, (the weight of whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass in weight) he being girded with a new sword, thought to have slain David. 17. But Abishai the son of Zeruiah succoured him, and smote the Philistine, and killed him. Then the men of David swore unto him, saying, Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel. 18. And it came to pass after this, that there was again a battle with the Philistines at Gob; then Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Saph, which was of the sons of the giant. 19. And there was again a battle in Gob with the Philistines, where Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim a Beth-lehemite, slew the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. 20. And there was yet a battle in Gath, where was a man of great stature, that had on every hand six fingers, and on every foot six toes, four and twenty in number; and he also was born to the giant. 21. And when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea the brother of David slew him. 22. These four were born to the giant in Gath, and fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

We have here the story of some rencounters with the Philistines, which happened, as it should seem, in the latter end of David's reign. Though he had so subdued them that they could not bring any great numbers into the field, yet, as long as they had any giants among them to be their champions, they would never be quiet, but took all occasions to disturb the peace of Israel, to challenge them, or make incursions upon them.

1. David himself was engaged with one of the giants: the Philistines began the war yet again, ver. 15. The enemies of God's Israel are restless in their attempts again them. David, though old, desired not a writ of ease from the public service, but he himself went down in person to fight against the Philistines. *Sensit non segnescit*. A sign he fought not for his own glory, at this age he was loaded with that, and needed no more, but for the good of his kingdom. But in this engagement, 1. We find him in distress and danger. He thought he could bear the fatigues of war as well as he had done formerly, his will was good, and he hoped he could do as at other times, but he found himself deceived, age had cut his hair, and after a little toil he waxed faint. His body could not keep pace with his mind. The champion of the Philistines was soon aware of his advantage, perceived that David's strength failed him, and then, being himself strong and well armed, he thought to have slain David, but God was not in his thoughts; and therefore in that very day they all perished. The enemies of God's people are often very strong, very subtle, and very sure of success, like Ishbi-benob, but there is no strength, nor council, nor confidence against the Lord. 2. Wonderfully rescued by Abishai, who came seasonably in to his relief, ver. 17. Herein we must own Abishai's courage and fidelity to his prince, to save whose life he bravely ventured his own: but much more the good providence of God, which brought him in to David's succour, in the minute of his extremity. Such a cause and such a champion, though distressed, shall not be deserted. When *Abishai succoured him*, gave him a cordial, it may be to relieve his fainting spirits, or appeared as his second, he (viz. David, so I understand it) *smote the Philistine and killed him*, for it is said ver. 22. David had himself a hand in slaying the giants. David fainted, but he did not flee; though his strength failed him, he bravely kept his ground, and then God sent him this help in the time of need, which, though brought him by his junior and inferior, he thankfully accepted of, and with a little recruit gained his point, and came off a conqueror. Christ in his agonies was strengthened by an angel. In spiritual conflicts even strong saints sometimes wax faint: then Satan attacks them furiously; but

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they that stand their ground and resist him shall be relieved, and made more than conquerors. 3. David's servants hereupon resolved that he should never expose himself thus any more. They had easily persuaded him not to fight against Absalom, chap. xviii. 3. but against the Philistines he would go, till, having had this fair escape, it was resolved in council, and confirmed with an oath, that *the light of Israel* (its guide and glory, so David was) should never be put again into such hazard of being blown out. Such valuable lives as David's was, ought to be preserved with a double care, both by themselves and others.

2. The rest of the giants fell by the hands of David's servants. 1. Saph was slain by Sibbechai, one of David's worthies, 1 Chron. xi. 29. 2 Sam. xxi. 18. 2. Another, who was brother to Goliath, was slain by Elhanan, who is mentioned chap. xxiii. 24. 3. Another, who was of such an unusual bulk that he had more fingers and toes than any other people, ver. 20. and such an unparalleled insolence, that though he had seen the fall of other giants, yet he defied Israel, was slain by Jonathan the son of Shimea; Shimea had one son named Jonadab, 2 Sam. xiii. 3. I should have taken it for the same with this Jonathan, but that was noted for subtilty, this for bravery. These giants, probably, were the remains of the sons of Anak, who, though long feared, fell at last.

Now observe, 1. It is folly for the strong man to glory in his strength; David's servants were no bigger nor stronger than other men, yet thus, by divine assistance, they mastered one giant after another. God chooseth by the weak things to confound the mighty. 2. It is common for those to go down slain to the pit, who have been the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, Ezek. xxxii. 22. 3. The most powerful enemies are often reserved for the last encounter. David began his glory with the conquest of one giant, and here concludes it with the conquest of four. Death is a Christian's last enemy, and a son of Anak, but through him that triumphed for us, we hope, even over that enemy, to be more than conquerors at last.

C H A P. XXII.

This chapter is a Psalm, a psalm of praise: we find it afterwards inserted among David's psalms, No. 18. with some little variation. We have it here as it was first composed for his own closet, and his own harp, but there we have it as it was afterwards delivered to the chief musician for the service of the church: a second edition with some amendments: but though it was calculated primarily for David's sake, yet it might indifferently serve the devotion of others, in giving thanks for their deliverances; or, it was intended that his people should thus join with him in his thanksgiving, because he being a public person, his deliverances were to be accounted public blessings, and called for public acknowledgments. The inspired historian having largely related David's deliverance in this and the foregoing book, and one particularly in the close of the foregoing chapter, thought fit to record this sacred poem as a memorial of all that had been before related. Some think David penned this psalm when he was old, upon a general review of the mercies of this life, and the many wonderful preservations God had blest him with, from first to last. We should in our praises look as far back as we can, and not suffer time to wear out the sense of God's favours. Others think he penned it when he was young, upon occasion of some of his first deliverances, and kept it by him for his after-use, and that upon every new deliverance, his practice was to sing this song. But the book of psalms shews that he varied, as there was occasion, and confined not himself to one form. Here is, 1. The title of the Psalm, ver. 1, 2. 2. The psalm itself, in which, with a very warm devotion, and a very great fluency and copiousness of expression, (1.) He gives glory to God. (2.) He takes comfort in him, and he finds matter for both, 1. In the experiences he had of God's former favours. 2. In the expectations he had of his further favours. These are intermixed throughout the whole psalm.

1. **A**ND David spake unto the LORD the words of this song, in the day that the LORD had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul:

Observe here, 1. That it has often been the lot of God's people to have many enemies, and to be in imminent danger of falling into their hands. David was a man after God's heart, but not after men's heart; many were those that hated him, and sought his ruin; Saul is particularly named, either, 1. As distinguished from his enemies of the heathen nations; Saul hated David, but David did not hate Saul, and therefore would not reckon him among his enemies; or, rather, 2. As the chief of his enemies, that was more malicious and powerful than any of them. Let not those whom God loves, marvel if the world hate them.

2. They that trust God in the way of duty, shall find him a present help to them in their greatest dangers. David did so, God delivered him out of the hand of Saul, he takes special notice of that; remarkable preservations should be mentioned in our praises with a particular remark. He delivered him also out of the hands of all his enemies, one after another; sometimes in one way, sometimes in another: and David from his own experience, has assured us, that though many are the troubles of the righteous, yet the Lord delivers them out of them all, Psalm xxxiv. 19. We shall never be delivered from all our enemies till we get to heaven; and to that heavenly kingdom God will preserve all his, 2 Tim. iv. 18.

3. Those that have received signal mercies, and many from God, ought to give him the glory of them. Every new mercy in our hand should put a new song into our mouth, even praises to our God. Where there is a grateful heart, out of the abundance of that the mouth will speak; David spake not to himself only for his own pleasure, or to those about him only for their instruction; but to the Lord, for his honour, the words of this song. Then we sing with grace when we sing to the Lord. In distress he cried with his voice, Psalm cxlii. 1. therefore with his voice he gave thanks: that is the sweetest vocal music.

4. We ought to be speedy in our thankful returns to God: *In the day that God delivered him, he sang this song*. While the mercy is fresh, and we are most affected with it, let the thank-offering be brought to be kindled with the fire of that affection.

2. And he said, The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer: 3. The God of my rock; in him will I trust; he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation,

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salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. 4. I will call on the LORD, *who is* worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies. 5. When the waves of death compassed me, the floods of ungodly men made me afraid. 6. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me. 7. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry *did enter* into his ears. 8. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth. 9. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. 10. He bowed the heavens also and came down: and darkness *was* under his feet. 11. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind. 12. And he made darkness pavilions round about him, dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies. 13. Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled. 14. The LORD thundered from heaven, and the Most High uttered his voice. 15. And he sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them. 16. And the channels of the sea appeared, the foundations of the world were discovered, at the rebuking of the LORD, at the blast of the breath of his nostrils. 17. He sent from above, he took me: he drew me out of many waters. 18. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them that hated me: for they were too strong for me. 19. They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay. 20. He brought me forth also into a large place, he delivered me, because he delighted in me. 21. The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. 22. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God. 23. For all his judgments *were* before me: and *as for* his statutes, I did not depart from them. 24. I was also upright before him, and have kept myself from mine iniquity. 25. Therefore the LORD hath recompensed me according to my righteousness; according to my cleanness in his eye-sight. 26. With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright. 27. With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself unfavoury. 28. And the afflicted people thou wilt save; but thine eyes *are* upon the haughty, that thou mayest bring them down. 29. For thou art my lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness. 30. For by thee I have run through a troop; by my God have I leaped over a wall. 31. *As for* God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD *is* tried: he *is* a buckler to all them that trust in him. 32. For who *is* God, save the LORD? and who *is* a rock, save our God? 33. God *is* my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect. 34. He maketh my feet like hind's feet: and setteth me upon my high places. 35. He teacheth my hands to war: so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. 36. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy gentleness hath made me great. 37. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip. 38. I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them: and turned not again until I had consumed them. 39. And I have consumed them, and wounded them, that they could not arise: yea, they are fallen under my feet. 40. For thou hast girded me with strength to battle: them that rose up against me, hast thou subdued under me. 41. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me. 42. They looked, but *there was* none to save; *even* unto the LORD, but he answered them not. 43. Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the mire of the street, and did spread them abroad. 44. Thou also hast delivered me from the strivings of my people, thou hast kept me to be head of the heathen: a people *which* I knew not, shall serve me. 45. Strangers shall submit themselves unto me, as soon as they hear, they shall be obedient unto me. 46. Strangers shall fade away, and they shall be afraid out of their close places. 47. The LORD liveth, and blessed be my rock: and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation. 48. It *is* God that avengeth me, and that bringeth down the people under me. 49. And that bringeth me forth from mine enemies: thou also hast lifted me up on high above them that rose up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man. 50. Therefore I will give thanks unto thee, O LORD,

among the heathen, and I will sing praises unto thy name. 51. *He is* the tower of salvation for his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, unto David, and to his seed for evermore.

Let us observe in this song of praise,

1. How David adores God, and gives him the glory of his infinite perfections. There is none like him, nor any to be compared with him, *ver. 23. Who is God, save the Lord?* All others that are adored as deities are counterfeits and pretenders: None to be relied on but he, *Who is a rock, save our God?* They are dead, but the Lord liveth, *ver. 47. They fail their worshippers when they most need them: But as for God, his way is perfect, ver. 31. Men begin in kindness, but end not, promise but perform not, but God will finish his work, and his word is tried and what we may trust.*
2. How he triumphs in the interest he had in this God, and his relation to him, which he lays down as the foundation of all the benefits he had received from him. He is my God, as such he cries to him, *ver. 7. and cleaves to him, ver. 22. and if my God, then my rock, ver. 2. i. e. my strength and my power, ver. 33. the rock under which I take shelter, and who is to me as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land: the rock on which I build my hope. The God of my rock, ver. 3. whatever is my strength and support, it is he that makes it so; nay, he is the God of the rock of my salvation, ver. 47. my saving strength is in him and from him. David often hid himself in rocks, 1 Sam. xxiv. 2. but God was his chief hiding-place. He is my fortress, in whom I am safe, and think myself so, my strong tower, or strong hold, in which I am out of the reach of real evils, the tower of salvation, ver. 51. which can neither be scaled, nor battered, nor undermined, salvation itself saves me: Am I in distress? He is my deliverer: Struck at, shot at? He is my shield: Pursued? He is my refuge: Oppressed? He is my saviour, that rescues me out of the hand of those that seek my ruin: Nay, he is the horn of my salvation, by which I am strongly protected, and my enemies strongly pushed: Christ is spoken of as the horn of salvation in the house of David, Luke i. 69. Am I burned and ready to sink? The Lord is my stay, ver. 14. by whom I am supported: Am I in the dark, benighted, at a loss? Thou art my lamp, O Lord, to shew me my way, and wilt lighten my darkness, ver. 29. If in sincerity we take the Lord for our God, all this, and much more he will be to us, all we need and can desire.*

3. What improvement he makes of his interest in God. If he be mine, 1. In him will I trust, *ver. 3. i. e. I will devote myself to his conduct, and then depend upon his power, and wisdom, and goodness to conduct me well.* 2. On him I will call, *ver. 4. for he is worthy to be praised.* What we have found in God, that is worthy to be praised, should engage us to pray to him, and thereby we do in effect praise him, and give glory to him. 3. To him I will give thanks, *ver. 50. and that publicly; when he was among the heathen, he would neither be afraid nor ashamed to own his obligations to the God of Israel.*

4. The full and large accounts he keeps for himself, and gives to others of the great and kind things God had done for him. This takes up most of the song. He gives God the glory both of his deliverances, and of his successes: shews both the perils he was delivered from, and the power he was advanced to.

(1.) He magnifies the great salvations God had wrought for him. God sometimes brings his people into very great difficulties and dangers, that he may have the honour of saving them, and they the comfort of being saved by him. He owns, *Thou hast saved me from violence, ver. 3. from mine enemies, ver. 4. from my strong enemy, meaning Saul, who, if God had not succoured him, would have been too hard for him, ver. 18. thou hast given me the shield of my salvation, ver. 36. To magnify the salvation he observes,*

1. That the danger was very great and threatening, out of which he was delivered. Men rose up against him, *ver. 40. that hated him, ver. 41. a violent man, ver. 49. viz. Saul, who was malicious in his designs against him, and vigorous in his pursuits. This is expressed figuratively, ver. 5, 6. He was surrounded with death on every side, threatened to be overwhelmed, and saw no way of escape; So violently did the waves of death beat upon him, so strongly did the cords and snares of death hold him; he could not help himself, no more than a man in the grave can. The floods of Belial, the wicked one, and his wicked instruments, made him afraid; he trembled to see not only earth, but death and hell in arms against him.*

2. That his deliverance was an answer to prayer, *ver. 7. He has here left us a good example, when we are in distress to cry unto God with importunity, as children in a fright cry to their parents; and great encouragement to do so, in that he found God ready to answer prayer out of his temple in heaven, where he is continually served and adored.*

3. That God appeared in a singular and extraordinary manner for him, and against his enemies; the expressions are borrowed from the descent of the Divine majesty upon mount Sinai, *ver. 8, 9, &c. We do not find, that in any of David's battles God fought for him, either with thunder, as in Samuel's time, or with hail, as in Joshua's time, or with the stars in their courses, as in Deborah's time; but those lofty metaphors are used, 1. To set forth the glory of God, which was manifested in his deliverance, his wisdom and power, his goodness and faithfulness, his justice and holiness, and his sovereign dominion over all the creatures, and all the counsels of men, which appeared in favour of David, were as clear and bright a discovery of God's glory to an eye of faith, as those would have been to an eye of sense. 2. To set forth God's displeasure against his enemies; God so espoused his cause, that he shewed himself an enemy to all his enemies: his anger is set forth by a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire of his mouth, *ver. 9. coals kindled, ver. 13. arrows, ver. 15. Who knows the power and terror of his wrath? 3. To set forth the mighty confusion which his enemies were put into, and the consternation that seized him; as if the earth had trembled, and the foundation of the world had been discovered, ver. 8—16. Who can stand before God when he is angry? 4. To shew how ready God was to help him; he rode upon a cherub and did fly, *ver. 11. God hastened to his succour, and came in to him with seasonable relief, though he had seemed at a distance. Yet he was a God hiding himself, (Isa. xlv. 15.) for he made darkness his pavilion, ver. 12. for the amazement of his enemies, and the amusement of his own people.***

4. That God manifested his particular favour and kindness to him in these deliverances, *ver. 20. He delivered me, because he delighted in me. The deliverance came not from common providence, but covenant love; he was herein treated as a favourite, so he perceived by the communications of divine grace and comfort to his soul, with these deliverances, and the communion he had with God in them. Herein he was a type of Christ, whom God upheld because he delighted in him, Isa. xlii. 1, 2.*

(2.) He magnifies the great successes God had crowned him with, he had not only preserved but prospered him. He was blessed, 1. With liberty and enlargement. He was brought into a large place, *ver. 20. where he had room to thrive; and his steps were enlarged under him, so that he had room to stir, ver. 37. no longer straitened and confined. 2. With military skill*

and strength, and swiftness: though he was bred up to the crook, he was wonderfully instructed in the arts of war, and spirited for the toils and perils of it. God having called him to fight his battles, he qualified him for the service, made him very ingenious: *he teacheth my hands to war*, ver. 33. and this ingenuity was as good as strength, for it follows, *so that a bow of steel is broken by my arms*, not so much by main force, as by slight of hand, hands so well taught. And very vigorous and valiant: *Thou hast girded me with strength to battle*, ver. 40. He gives God the glory of all his courage and ability for service. And very expeditious: *He maketh my feet swift like hinds feet*, ver. 34. which is of great advantage, both in charging and retreating. 3. With victory over his enemies, not only Saul and Absalom, but the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Syrians, and other neighbouring nations, whom he subdued and made tributaries to Israel. His wonderful victories are here described, ver. 38—42. They were speedy victories, *I turned not again till I had consumed them*, ver. 38. and complete victories: the enemies of Israel were wounded, destroyed, consumed, fell under his feet, trampled upon, and disabled to rise, and their necks lay at his mercy. They cried both to earth and heaven for help, but in vain, *there was none to save*, none that durst appear for them: God answered them not, they were not on his side, nor did they cry unto him, till they were brought to the last extremity; being thus abandoned, they became an easy prey to David's righteous and victorious sword, so that he *beat them as small as the dust of the earth*, which is scattered by the wind, and trodden on by every foot. 4. With advancement to honour and power. To this he was anointed before his troubles began, and at length, *post tot discrimina rerum*, he gained his point. God made his way perfect, ver. 33. gave him success in all his undertakings, *Set him upon his high places*, ver. 34. noting both safety and dignity. God's gentleness, his grace and tender mercy, made him great, ver. 36. gave him great wealth and great authority, and a name like that of the great men of the earth. He was to be the head of the heathen, ver. 44. his signal preservations evidenced, that he was designed and reserved for something great: To rule over all Israel, notwithstanding the strivings of the people, and so that they, whom he had not known should serve him, many of the nations that lay remote. Thus he was lifted up on high, as high as the throne, above those that rose up against him, ver. 49.

5. The comfortable reflections he makes upon his own integrity, which God by those wonderful deliverances had graciously owned, and witnessed to, ver. 21—25. He means especially his integrity with reference to Saul and Ish-bosheth, Absalom and Sheba, and those who either opposed his coming to the crown, or endeavoured to dethrone him; they falsely accused him and misrepresented him, but he had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he was not an ambitious aspiring man, a false and bloody man, as they called him, that he had never taken any indirect unlawful courses to secure or raise himself, but in his whole conduct had kept in the way of his duty; and that in the whole course of his conversation he had, for the main, made religion his business, so that he could take God's favours to him, as the rewards of his righteousness, not of debt, but of grace; God had recompensed him, though not for his righteousness, as if that had merited any thing at the hand of God, yet according to his righteousness, which he was well pleased with, and had an eye to.

His conscience witnessed for him; 1. That he had made the word of God his rule, and had kept to it, ver. 23. wherever he was, God's judgments were before him as his guide; wherever he went he took his religion along with him, and though he was forced to depart from his country, and sent as it were to serve other gods, yet as for God's statutes he did not depart from them; but kept the way of the Lord and walked in it. 2. That he had carefully avoided the by-paths of sin. He had not wickedly departed from his God: he could not say but he had taken some false steps, but he had not deserted God, nor forsaken his way. Sins of infirmity he could not acquit himself from, but the grace of God had kept him from presumptuous sins. Though he had sometimes weakly departed from his duty, he had never wickedly departed from his God. By this it appeared, he was upright before God, or to God in his sight, and with an eye to him, that he kept himself from his own iniquity: not only from that particular sin of killing Saul, when it was in the power of his hand to do it, but in general he was afraid of sin, and watchful against it, and made conscience of what he said and did. The matter of Uriah is an exception, 1 Kings xv. 5. like that in Hezekiah's character, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. Note, a careful abstaining from our own iniquity, is one of the best evidences of our own integrity; and the testimony of our consciences for us that we have done so will be such a rejoicing, as will not only lessen the griefs of an afflicted state, but increase the comforts of an advanced state. David reflected with more comfort upon his victories over his own iniquity, than upon his conquest of Goliath, and all the host of the uncircumcised Philistines; and the witness of his own heart to the uprightness was sweeter, though more silent music, than theirs that sang, *David has slain his ten thousands*. If a great man be a good man, his goodness will be much more his satisfaction than his greatness. Let favour be shewed to the upright, and his uprightness will sweeten it, will double it.

6. The comfortable prospects he has of God's farther favour, as he looks back, so he looks forward with pleasure, and assures himself of the kindness God has in store for all the saints, for himself and for his seed.

1. For all good people, ver. 26, 27, 28. As God had dealt with him according to his uprightness, so he will with all others. He takes occasion to lay down the established rules of God's proceedings with the children of men: 1. That he will do good to those that are good and upright in their hearts. As we are found towards God, he will be found towards us. (1.) God's mercy and grace will be the joy of those that are merciful and gracious: even the merciful need mercy, and they shall obtain it. (2.) God's uprightness; his justice and faithfulness will be the joy of those that are upright: just and faithful both towards God and man. (3.) God's purity and holiness will be the joy of those that are pure and holy, who therefore give thanks at the remembrance of it. And if any of these good people be afflicted people he will save them, either out of their afflictions, or by and after them. On the other hand, 2. That those who turn aside to crooked ways he will lead forth with the workers of iniquity, as he saith in another psalm. *With the froward he will wrestle*; and those with whom God's wrestles, are sure to go by the worse. *Woe unto him that strives with his maker*! He will walk contrary to those that walk contrary to him, and be displeased with those that are displeased with him. As for the haughty, his eyes are upon them making them out as it were to be brought down, for he resists the proud.

2. For himself. He foresees that his conquests and kingdom should be yet farther enlarged, ver. 45, 46. Even the sons of the strangers, that should hear the report of his victories, and the tokens of God's presence with him, should be possessed with a fear of him, should be forced to submit to him, though feignedly, and should be obedient to him. The successes which he had had he looked upon as earnest of more, and means of more: who durst oppose him, whom so many had been overcome by? Thus the Son of David goes on conquering, and to conquer, Rev. vi. 7. His gospel that had been victorious shall be to more and more.

3. For his seed. He sheweth mercy to his Messiah, ver. 51. not only to David himself, but to that seed of his for evermore. David was himself anointed of God, not an usurper, but duly called to the government and

qualified for it, therefore he doubted not but God would shew mercy to him: that mercy he had promised not to take from him, nor from his posterity, chap. vii. 15, 16. on that promise he depends with an eye to Christ, who alone as his seed for evermore, whose throne and kingdom still continue, and will to the end, when the siege and lineage of David is long since extinct. See Psalm lxxxix. 28, 29. Thus all his joys and all his hopes terminate, as ours always should in the great Redeemer.

C H A P. XXIII.

The historian is now drawing towards a conclusion of David's reign, and therefore gives us an account here, 1. of some of his last words, which he spoke by inspiration, and which seem to have reference to his seed that was to be for evermore, spoken of in the close of the foregoing chapter, ver. 1—7. 2. Of the great men, especially the military men, that were employed under him, the first three, ver. 8—17. Two of the next three, ver. 18—23. And then the thirty, ver. 24—39.

1. NOW these be the last words of David: David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, 2. The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue, 3. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: 4. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds: as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. 5. Although my house be not so with God: yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. 6. ¶ But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands. 7. But the man that shall touch them, must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear, and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place.

We have here the last will and testament of king David, or a codicil annexed to it, after he had settled the crown upon Solomon, and his treasures upon the temple which was to be built. The last words of great and good men are thought worthy to be in a special manner remarked and remembered; David would have those taken notice of and added, either to his psalms (as they are here to that in the foregoing chapter) or to the chronicles of his reign. These words especially, ver. 5. though recorded before we may suppose, he often repeated for his own consolation, even to his last breath, and therefore they are called his last words. When we find death approaching, we should endeavour both to honour God, and to edify those about us, with our last words. Let those that have had long experience of God's goodness, and the pleasantness of the ways of wisdom, when they come to finish their course, leave a record of those experiences, and bear their testimony to the truth of the promise. We have upon record the last words of Jacob and Moses, and here of David, designed, as those, for a legacy to them that were left behind. We are here told,

1. Whose last will and testament this is. This related, either, as is usual, by the testator himself, or rather by the historian, ver. 1. He is described, 1. By the meanness of his original; *he was the son of Jesse*. It is good for those who are advanced to be corner-stones and top-stones, to be often minded, and often to remember the rock out of which they were hewn. 2. The height of his elevation: *He was raised up on high*, as one favoured of God, and designed for something great: raised up as a prince, to sit higher than his neighbours, and as a prophet, to see farther: for, 1. He was the anointed of the God of Jacob, and so was serviceable to the people of God in their civil interests, the protection of their country, and the administration of justice among them. 2. He was the sweet psalmist of Israel, and so was serviceable to them in their religious exercises: he penned the psalms, set the tunes, appointed both the fingers and the instruments of music, by which the devotions of good people were much excited and enlarged. Note, Singing of psalms is a sweet ordinance, very agreeable to those that delight in praising God. It is reckoned among the honours to which David was raised up, that he was a psalmist: in that he was as truly great, as in his being the anointed of the God of Jacob. Note, It is a true preferment to be serviceable to the church in acts of devotion, and instrumental to procure the blessed work of prayer and praise. Observe, Was David a prince; he was so for Jacob: was he a psalmist? he was so for Israel. Note, The dispensation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal, and therefore every man has received the gift, *ja let him minister the same*.

2. What the purport of it is. It is an account of his communion with God. Observe,

1. What God said to him, both for his direction, and for his encouragement, as a king, and to him of like manner of use to his successors. Gracious souls take a pleasure in calling to mind what they have heard from God, in recollecting his word, and revolving it in their minds. Thus what God spoke once, David heard, twice, yea often.

See here, 1. Who spoke. The spirit of the Lord: the God of Israel, and the rock of Israel, which some think is an intimation of the Trinity of persons in the Godhead the Father the God of Israel, the Son the rock of Israel, and the Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, who spoke by the prophets, and particularly by David, and whose word was not only in his heart, but in his tongue for the benefit of others. David here avows his divine inspiration, that in his psalms, and in this composition here, the Spirit of God spake by him. He, and other holy men, spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. This puts an honour upon the book of Psalms, and recommends them to our use in our devotions, that they are words which the Holy Ghost teacheth.

2. What was spoken. Here seems to be a distinction made between what the Spirit of God spoke by David, which includes all his psalms, and what the Rock of Israel spoke to David, which concerned himself and his family. Let ministers observe, that those by whom God speaks to others, are concerned to hear and heed what he speaks to themselves. They whose office it is to teach others their duty, must be sure to learn and do their own.

Now

Now that which is here said, ver. 3, 4. may be considered,

(1.) With application to David and his royal family. And so here is, 1. The duty of magistrates enjoined them. When a king was spoken to from God, he was not to be complimented with the height of his dignity, and the extent of his power, but to be told his duty. *Must* is for the king, we say, here is a *must* for the king, *he must be just, ruling in the fear of God*; and so must all inferior magistrates in their places. Let rulers remember that they *rule over men*, not over beasts, whom they may enslave and abuse at pleasure, but over reasonable creatures, and of the same rank with themselves. They *rule over men* that have their follies and infirmities, and therefore must be borne with. They *rule over men*, but under God, and for him; and therefore, (1.) They *must be just*, both to those over whom they rule, in allowing them their rights and properties, and between those over whom they rule, using their power to right the injured against the injurious, see *Deut. i. 16, 17*. It is not enough that they do no wrong, but they must not suffer wrong to be done. (2.) They *must rule in the fear of God*, i. e. they must themselves be possessed with a fear of God, by which they will be effectually restrained from all acts of injustice and oppression: Nehemiah was so, *chap. v. 15*. *So did not I, because of the fear of God*; and Joseph, *Gen. xlii. 18*. They must also endeavour to promote the fear of God, i. e. the practice of religion among those over whom they rule. The magistrate is to be the keeper of both tables, and to protect both godliness and honesty. 2. Prosperity promised them if they do this duty, *He that rules in the fear of God, shall be as the light of the morning*, ver. 4. Light is sweet and pleasant, and he that doth his duty shall have the comfort of it; his rejoicing will be the testimony of his conscience. Light is bright, and a good prince is illustrious; his justice and piety will be his honour. Light is a blessing, nor are there any greater and more extensive blessings to the public, than princes that *rule in the fear of God*. It is like the light of the morning, which is most welcome after the darkness of the night, so was David's government after Saul's, *Psal. lxxv. 3*, and which is increasing, *shines more and more to the perfect day*; such is the growing lustre of a good government. It is likewise compared to the tender grass, which the earth produceth for the service of man; it brings with it a harvest of blessings. See *Psal. lxxii. 6—16*, which were some also of the last words of David, and seem to refer to these here.

(2.) With application to Christ, the son of David, and then it must all be taken as a prophecy, and the original will bear it; *There shall be a ruler among men, not over men, that shall be just, and shall rule in the fear of God*, i. e. shall order the affairs of religion, and divine worship, according to his father's will; and he shall be as the light of the morning, &c. for he is the light of the world, and as the tender grass, for he is the branch of the Lord, and the fruit of the earth, *Isa. iv. 2*. Compare this with those promises of Christ, which speak of his reigning in righteousness, and being of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, *Isa. xi. 1—5*, xxxii. 1, 2. *Psal. lxxii. 2*. This God by the Spirit gave David in the foresight of, to comfort him under the many calamities of his family, and the melancholy prospects he had of the degeneracy of his seed.

2. What comfortable use he made of this which God spake to him, and what were his devout meditations on it, by way of reply, ver. 5. It is not unlike his meditation, on occasion of such a message, *2 Sam. vii. 18, &c.* What goes before the Rock of Israel spake to him, this the Spirit of God spake by him, and it is a most excellent confession of his faith and hope in the everlasting covenant. Here is,

(1.) Trouble supposed. *Although my house be not so with God, and although he made it not to grow*. David's family was not so with God, as is described, ver. 3, 4. and as he could wish, not so good; not so happy; it had not been so while he lived, he foresaw it would not be so when he was gone; that his house would be neither so pious nor so prosperous as one might have expected the offspring of such a father to be. 1. *Not so with God*. Note, We and ours that are really which we are with God. This was it that David's heart was upon concerning his children, that they might be right with God, faithful to him, and zealous for him. But the children of godly parents, are oftentimes neither so holy, nor so happy, as might be expected. We must be made to know, that it is corruption, not grace, that runs in the blood; that the race is not to the swift, but God gives his Spirit as a free agent. 2. *Not made to grow*, in number, in power; it is God that makes families to grow, or not to grow, *Psal. cvii. 41*. Good men have often the melancholy prospect of a declining family. David's house was typical of the church of Christ, which is his house, *Heb. iii. 3*. Suppose this be not so with God as we could wish, suppose it be diminished, distressed, disgraced, and weakened, by errors and corruptions, almost extinct, yet God has made a covenant with the church's head, the Son of David, that he will preserve to him a seed, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his house. This our Saviour comforted himself with in his sufferings, that the covenant with him stood firm, *Isa. liii. 10, 11, 12*.

(2.) Comfort inferred. *Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant*. Whatever trouble a child of God may have a prospect of, still he hath some comfort or other to balance it with, *2 Cor. iv. 8, 9*, and none like this here.

1. It may be understood of the covenant of royalty, in the type which God made with David and his seed touching the kingdom, *Psal. cxxxii. 11, 12*. But, 2. It must look farther to the covenant of grace, made with all believers, that God will be in Christ to them a God, which was signified by the covenant of royalty, and therefore the promises of the covenant are called, *the sure mercies of David*, *Isa. lv. 3*. It is this only that is the everlasting covenant, and it cannot be imagined, that David, who in so many of his psalms speaks so clearly concerning Christ, and the grace of the gospel, should forget it in his last words. God has made a covenant of grace with us in Jesus Christ, and we are here told, (1.) That it is an everlasting covenant, from everlasting, in the contrivance and counsel of it: and to everlasting, in the continuance and consequences of it. (2.) That it is ordered, well ordered in all things, admirably well, to advance the glory of God, and the honour of the Mediator, together with the holiness and comfort of believers. It is herein well ordered, that whatever is required in the covenant is promised, and that every transgressor in the covenant, doth not throw us out of covenant; and that it puts our salvation, not in our own keeping, but in the keeping of a mediator. (3.) That it is sure, and therefore sure because well ordered; the general offer of it is sure, the promised mercies sure, upon the performance of the conditions. The particular application of it to true believers is sure, it is sure to all we feed. (4.) That it is all our salvation: nothing but this will save us, and this is sufficient; it is this only upon which our salvation depends. (5.) That therefore it must be all our desire. Let me have an interest in this covenant, and the promises of it, and I have enough, I desire no more.

3. Here is the doom of the sons of Belial read, ver. 7. (1.) They shall be thrust away as thorns, rejected, abandoned; they are like thorns, not to be touched with hands, so passionate and furious that they cannot be managed or dealt with by a wise and faithful reproof, but must be restrained by law, and the sword of justice, *Psal. xxxii. 9*, and therefore like thorns, (2.) They shall at length be utterly burnt with fire in the same place, *Heb. vi. 8*. Now this is intended either, 1. As a direction to magistrates to use their power for the punishing and suppressing of wickedness. Let them

thrust away the sons of Belial; see *Psal. ci. 3*. Or, 2. As a caution to magistrates, and particularly to David's sons and successors, to see that they be not themselves sons of Belial (as too many of them were) for then neither the dignity of their place, nor their relation to David, would secure them from being thrust away by the righteous judgments of God. Though men could not deal with them, God would. Or, 3. As a prediction of the ruin of all the implacable enemies of Christ's kingdom: There are enemies without, that openly oppose it, and fight against it; and enemies within, that secretly betray it, and are false to it; both are the sons of Belial, children of the wicked one, one of the serpents seed; both are as thorns, grievous and vexatious: but both shall be so thrust away, as that Christ will set up his kingdom in despite of their enmity, will go through them, *Isa. xxvii. 4*, and will in due time bless his church with such peace, that there shall be no pricking brier, nor grieving thorn. And those that will not repent, to give glory to God, shall, in the judgment-day (to which the Chaldee paraphrast refers this) be burnt with unquenchable fire. See *Luke xix. 27*.

8. ¶ These be the names of the mighty men whom David had; the Tachmonite that sat in the seat, chief among the captains, (the same was Adino the Eznite) he lift up his spear against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time. 9. And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo the Ahohite, one of the three mighty men with David, when they defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone away. 10. He arose, and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword: and the LORD wrought a great victory that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil. 11. And after him was Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite: and the Philistines were gathered together into a troop, where was a piece of ground full of lentiles, and the people fled from the Philistines. 12. But he stood in the midst of the ground and defended it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD wrought a great victory. 13. And three of the thirty chiefs went down and came to David in the harvest time, unto the cave of Adullam: And the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim. 14. And David was then in an hold, and the garrison of the Philistines was then in Beth-lehem. 15. And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, which is by the gate! 16. And the three mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Beth-lehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David: nevertheless, he would not drink thereof, but poured it out unto the LORD. 17. And he said, Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this: Is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mighty men. 18. And Abishai the brother of Joab, the son of Zeruiah, was chief among three; and he lifted up his spear against three hundred, and slew them, and had the name among three. 19. Was he not most honourable of three? Therefore he was their captain: howbeit, he attained not unto the first three. 20. And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man, of Kabzeel, who had done many acts, he slew two lion-like men of Moab: he went down also and slew a lion in the midst of a pit in time of snow. 21. And he slew an Egyptian, a goodly man: and the Egyptian had a spear in his hand, but he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear. 22. These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had the name among three mighty men. 23. He was more honourable than the thirty, but he attained not to the first three: and David set him over his guard. 24. Asahel the brother of Joab was one of the thirty. Elhanan the son of Dodo of Beth-lehem. 25. Shammah the Harodite, Elika the Harodite, 26. Helek the Paltite, Ira the son of Ikkeish the Tekoite, 27. Abiezer the Anethothite, Mebunnai the Hushathite, 28. Zalmon the Ahohite, Maharai the Netophathite, 29. Heleb the son of Baanah, a Netophathite, Ittai the son of Ribai out of Gibeah of the children of Benjamin, 30. Benaiah the Pirathonite, Hiddai of the brooks of Gaash, 31. Abi-albon the Arbathite, Azmaveth the Barhumite, 32. Eliahba, the Shalbonite; of the sons of Jashen, Jonathan, 33. Shammah the Hararite, Ahiam the son of Sharar the Hararite, 34. Eliphelet the son of Ahabai, the son of the Maachathite, Eliam the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite, 35. Hezrai the Carmelite, Paarai the Arbite, 36. Igal the son of Nathan of Zobah, Bani the Gadite, 37. Zelek the Ammonite, Nahari the Beerothite, armour-bearer to Joab the son of Zeruiah. 38. Ira an Ithrite, Gereb an Ithrite, 39. Uriah the Hittite: thirty and seven in all.

The catalogue which the historian has here left upon record of the great soldiers that were in David's time, is intended, 1. For the honour of David, who trained them up in the arts and exercises of war, and set them an example of conduct and courage. It is the reputation as well as the advantage of a prince, to be attended and served by such brave men as are here described. 2. For the honour of those worthies themselves, who were instrumental to bring David to the crown, settle and protect him in the throne, and to enlarge his conquests. Note, Those that in public stations venture themselves, and lay out themselves, to serve the interests of their country, are worthy of double honour, both to be respected by those of their own age, and to be remembered by posterity. 3. To excite those that come after to a generous emulation. 4. To shew how much religion contributes to the inspiring of men with true courage. David, both by his psalms, and by his offerings for the service of the temple, greatly promoted piety among the grandees of the kingdom, 1 Chron. xxix. 6. and when they became famous for piety they became famous for bravery.

Now these mighty men are here divided into three ranks.

1. The first three, who had done the greatest exploits, and thereby gained the greatest reputation, Adino, ver. 8. Eleazar, ver. 9, 10. and Shammah, ver. 11, 12. I do not remember, that we read of any of these, or of their actions any where else in all the story of David, but here, and in the parallel place, 1 Chron. xi. Many great and remarkable events are passed by in the annals, which relate rather the blemishes, than the glory of David's reign, especially after his sin in the matter of Uriah; so that we may think it was really more illustrious than it has seemed in our reading the story of it.

The exploits of this brave triumvirate are here recorded. They signified themselves in the wars of Israel against their enemies, especially the Philistines. 1. Adino slew eight hundred at once, with his spear. 2. Eleazar defied the Philistines, as they by Goliath had defied Israel, but with better success, and greater bravery, for when the men of Israel were gone away, he not only kept his ground, but *arose and smote the Philistines*, on whom God struck a terror, equal to the courage with which this great hero was inspired. His hand was weary, and yet it clave to his sword, as long as he had any strength remaining he held his weapon, and followed his blow. Thus in the service of God, we should keep up the willingness, and resolution of the spirit, notwithstanding the weakness and weariness of the flesh: faint, yet pursuing (*Judg. viii. 4.*) the hand weary, yet not quitting the sword. Now Eleazar had beaten the enemy, the men of Israel that were gone away from the battle, ver. 9. returned to spoil, ver. 10. It is common for those who quit the field, when any thing is to be done, to hasten to it when any thing is to be got. 4. Shammah met with a party of the enemy, that were foraging, and routed them, ver. 11, 12. But observe both concerning this exploit and the former, it is here said, *The Lord wrought a great victory*. Note, How great forever the bravery of the instruments is, the praise of the achievement must be given to God. These fought the battles, but God wrought the victory: Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, or any of his military operations, but let him that glories glory in the Lord.

2. The next three were distinguished from, and dignified above, the thirty, but attained not to the first three, ver. 23. All great men are not of the same size. Many a bright and benign star there is, which is not of the first magnitude; and many a good ship not of the first rate: of this second triumvirate, two only are named, Abishai and Benaiah, whom we have often met with in the story of David; and seem to have been not inferior in serviceableness, though they were in dignity, to the first three.

Here is, 1. A brave action of these three in conjunction. They attended David in his troubles, when he absconded in the cave of Adullam, ver. 13. suffered with him; and therefore were afterwards preferred by him. When David and his brave men that attended him, who had acted so vigorously against the Philistines, were by the iniquity of the time in Saul's reign, driven to shelter themselves from his rage in caves and strong holds, no marvel that the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim, and put a garrison even in Bethlehem itself, ver. 13, 14. If the church's guides are so misled, as to persecute some of her best friends and champions, the common enemy will no doubt get advantage by it. If David had had his liberty, Bethlehem should not have been now in the Philistines hands.

But being so, we are here told, 1. How earnestly David longed for the water of the well of Bethlehem. Some make it a public-spirited wish, and that he meant, O that we could drive the garrison of the Philistines out of Bethlehem, and make that beloved city of mine our own again; the well being put for the city, as the river often signifies the country it passes through. But if he meant so, those about him did not understand him; therefore it seems rather to be an instance of his weakness. It was harvest-time, the weather was hot, he was thirsty, perhaps good water was scarce, and therefore he earnestly wishes, O that I could but have one draught of the water of the well of Bethlehem! With the water of that well he had often refreshed himself when he was a youth, and nothing now will serve him but that, though it is almost impossible to come at it. He longed like a woman with child, strangely indulging a humour which he could give no reason for. Other water might quench his thirst as well, but he had a fancy for that above any. It is folly to entertain such fancies, and greater folly to insist upon the gratification of them. We ought to check our appetites, when they go out inordinately towards those things that really are more pleasant and grateful than other things, *Be not desirous of dainties*, much more when they are thus set upon such things as only please a humour. 2. How bravely his three mighty men, Abishai, Benaiah, and another not named, ventured through the camp of the Philistines upon the very mouth of danger, and fetched water from the well of Bethlehem, without David's knowledge. When he wished for it, he was far from desiring that any of his men should venture their lives for it, but those three did, ver. 18. To shew, 1. How much they valued their prince, and with what pleasure they could run the greatest hazards, and undergo the greatest hardships in his service. David, though anointed king, was as yet an exile, a poor prince that had no external advantages to recommend him to the affection and esteem of his attendants, nor was he in any capacity to prefer or reward them, yet those three were thus zealous for his satisfaction, firmly believing the time of recompence would come. Let us be willing to enter in the cause of Christ, even when it is a suffering cause, as those that are assured it will prevail, and we shall not lose by it at last. Were they so forward to expose themselves upon the least hint of their prince's mind, and so ambitious to please him? And shall not we covet to approve ourselves to our Lord Jesus, by a ready compliance with every intimation of his will, given us by his word, Spirit, and providence? 2. How little they feared the Philistines. They were glad of an occasion to defy them. Whether they broke through the host clandestinely, and with such art that the Philistines did not discover them, or openly, and with such terrors in their looks that the Philistines durst not oppose them, is not certain; it should seem they forced their way, sword in hand. But see, 3. How self-denyingly David, when he had this far-fetched, dear-bought water, poured it out before the Lord, ver. 17. (1.) Thus he would shew the tender regard he had to the

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lives of his soldiers, and how far he was from being prodigal of their blood, *Psal. lxxii. 14.* In God's sight the death of his saints is precious. (2.) Thus he would testify his sorrow, for speaking that foolish word, which occasioned those men to put their lives in their hands. Great men should take heed what they say, lest any ill-use be made of it by those about them. (3.) Thus he would prevent the like rashness in any of his men for the future. (4.) Thus he would cross his own foolish fancy, and punish himself for entertaining and indulging it, and shew that he had sober thoughts to correct his rash ones, and knew how to deny himself, even in that which he was most fond of. Such generous mortifications become the wise, the great, and the good. (5.) Thus he would honour God, and give glory to him; the water purchased at this rate, he thought too precious for his own drinking, and fit to be poured out to God as a drink-offering. If it were the blood of these men it was God's due, for the blood was always his. (6.) Bishop Patrick speaks of some who think that David hereby shewed it was not material water he longed for, but the Messiah, who had the water of life; who he knew should be born at Bethlehem, which the Philistines therefore should not be able to destroy. Lastly, But David looks upon that water as very precious, which was got but with the hazard of these men's blood, and shall not we much more value those benefits, for the purchasing of which our blessed Saviour shed his blood? Let us not undervalue the blood of the covenant, as they do that undervalue the blessings of the covenant.

2. The brave actions which two of them did particularly at other times. Abishai slew three hundred men at once, ver. 18, 19. Benaiah did many great things: 1. He slew two Moabites that were lion-like men, so bold and strong, so fierce and furious. 2. He slew a lion in the pit, either in his own defence, as Samson, or perhaps, in kindness to the country, a lion that had done mischief: It being in a time of snow, he was more stiff, and the lion more fierce and ravenous, and yet he mastered him. 3. He slew an Egyptian, on what occasion it is not said, he was well set, and well armed, but Benaiah attacked him with no other weapon than a walking staff, dextrously wrested his spear out of his hand, and slew him with it, ver. 24. For these and the like exploits David preferred him to be captain of the life-guard standing forces, ver. 23.

3. Inferior to these second three, but of great-note, were the thirty-one here mentioned by name, ver. 24. *ad finem*. Asahel is the first, who was slain by Abner in the beginning of David's reign, but lost not his place in this catalogue. Elhanan is the next, brother to Eleazar, one of the first three, ver. 9. The surnames here given them, are taken, as it should seem, from the places of their birth or habitation, as many surnames with us originally were. From all parts of the nation, the most wise and valiant were picked up to serve the king. Several of these here named, we find captains of the twelve courses which David appointed, one for each month in the year, 1 Chron. xxvii. They that did worthily were preferred according to their merit. One of them was the son of Abithophel, ver. 34. the son famous in the camp, as the father at the council board. But to find Uriah the Hittite bringing up the rear of these worthies, as it revives the remembrance of David's sin, so it aggravates it; that a man, who deserved so well of his king and country, should be so ill-treated. Joab is not mentioned among all these, either, 1. Because he was so big that he did not need to be mentioned: the first of the first three, satchief among the captains, but Joab was over them as general. Or, 2. Because he was so bad he did not deserve to be mentioned; for though he was confessedly a great soldier, and one that had so much religion in him as to dedicate of his spoils to the house of God, 1 Chron. xvi. 28. yet he lost as much honour by slaying two of David's friends, as ever he got by slaying his enemies.

Christ the son of David has worthies too, who, like David's, are influenced by his example, fight his battles against the spiritual enemies of his kingdom; and in his strength are more than conquerors. Christ's apostles were his immediate attendants, did and suffered great things for him, and at length came to reign with him. They are mentioned with honour in the New Testament, as these in the Old, especially, Rev. xxi. 14. nay, all the good soldiers of Jesus Christ have their names better preferred than even these worthies have; for they are written in heaven. This honour have all his saints.

C H A P. XXIV.

The last words of David which we read in the chapter before were admirably good, but in this chapter we read of some of his last works, which were none of the best; yet he repented, and did his first works again, and so he finished well. We have here, (1.) His sin, which was numbering the people in the pride of his heart, ver. 1—9. (2.) His conviction of the sin, and repentance for it, ver. 10. (3.) The judgment inflicted upon him for it, ver. 11—15. (4.) The staying of the judgment, ver. 15—17. (5.) The erecting of an altar in token of God's reconciliation to him and his people, ver. 18—25.

1. **A**ND again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them, to lay, Go number Israel and Judah. 2. For the king said to Joab the captain of the host, which was with him, Go now through all the tribes of Israel, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, and number ye the people, that I may know the number of the people. 3. And Joab said unto the king, Now the LORD thy God add unto the people (how many soever they be) an hundred-fold, and that the eyes of my lord the king may see it: but why doth my lord the king delight in this thing? 4. Notwithstanding, the king's word prevailed against Joab, and against the captains of the host: and Joab and the captains of the host went out from the presence of the king to number the people of Israel. 5. ¶ And they passed over Jordan, and pitched in Arcoer, on the right-side of the city that lieth in the midst of the river of Gad, and toward Jazer. 6. Then they came to Gilead, and to the land of Tahtim-hodshi; and they came to Dan-jaan, and about to Zidon. 7. And came to the strong hold of Tyre, and to all the cities of the Hivites, and of the Canaanites; and they went out to the south of

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Judah even to Beer-sheba. 8. So when they had gone through all the land, they came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days. 9. And Joab gave up the sum of the number of the people unto the king; and there were in Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword; and the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men.

Here is, 1. The orders which David gave to Joab to number the people of Israel and Judah, ver. 1, 2. Two things here seem strange.

1. The sinfulness of this. What harm was there in it? Did not Moses twice number the people without any crime? Doth not political arithmetic come in among the other politics of a prince? Should not the shepherd know the number of his sheep? Doth not the son of David know all his own by name? Might not he make good use of this calculation? What evil has he done, if he do this? *Answer.* It is certain it was a sin, and a great sin; but where the evil of it lay is not so certain. 1. Some think the fault was, that he numbered them that was under twenty years old, if they were but of stature and strength able to bear arms; and that was the reason why this account was not enrolled, because it was illegal, 1 Chron. xxvii. 23, 24. 2. Others think the fault was, that he did not require the half-shekel, which was to be paid for the service of the sanctuary, whenever the people were numbered, as a ransom for their souls, Exod. xxx. 12. 3. Others think he did it with a design to impose a tribute upon them for himself, and to be put into his treasury; this by way of a poll, which when he knew their numbers, he could tell what it would amount to; but nothing of this appears, nor was David ever a raiser of taxes. 4. This was the fault, that he had no orders from God to do it, nor was there any occasion for the doing of it. It was a needless trouble both to himself and to his people. 5. Some think that it was an affront to the ancient promise which God made to Abraham, that his seed should be innumerable as the dust of the earth; it favoured of distrust of that promise, or a design to shew that it was not fulfilled in the letter of it: He would number those of whom God had said, that they could not be numbered. Those know not what they do, that go about to disprove the word of God. 6. That which was the worst thing in numbering the people, was, that David did it in the pride of his heart, which was Hezekiah's sin in shewing his treasures to the ambassadors, (1.) It was a proud conceit of his own greatness, in having the command of so numerous a people, as if their increase had been owing to any conduct of his, which was to be ascribed purely to the blessing of God. (2.) It was a proud confidence in his own strength. By publishing among the nations the number of his people, he thought to appear the more formidable; and doubted not, if he should have any war, but to overpower his enemies with the multitude of his forces: trusting in an arm of flesh, more than he should have done, who had written to much of trusting in God only. God judges not of sin as we do: What appears to us harmless, or at least but a small offence, may be a great sin in the eye of God, who sees men's principles, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart: But his judgment, we are sure, is according to truth.

2. The spring from which it is here said to arise, is yet more strange, ver. 1. It is not strange that the anger of the Lord should be kindled against Israel; there was cause enough for it, they were unthankful for the blessings of David's government, and strangely drawn in to take part with Absalom first, and afterwards with Sheba; we have reason to think, that their peace and plenty made them secure and sensual, and for this God was displeased with them, but that in this displeasure he should move David to number the people is very strange. We are sure that God is not the author of sin; he tempts no man: we are told 1 Chron. xxi. 1. that Satan provoked David to number Israel; Satan, as an enemy, suggested it for a sin, as he put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ: God, as a righteous Judge, permitted it, with a design, from this sin of David, to take an occasion to punish other sins of Israel, which he might justly have punished them for without this. But as before he brought a famine upon them for the sin of Saul, so now a pestilence for the sin of David; that princes may, from these instances, learn, when the judgments of God are abroad, to suspect that their sins are the ground of the controversy, and may therefore repent and reform themselves, which should have a great influence upon national repentance upon reformation, and that people may learn to pray for those in authority, that God would keep them from sin, because if they sin the kingdom smarts.

2. This opposition which Joab made to these orders. Even he was aware of David's folly and vain-glory in this design. He observed that David gave no reason for it, only, *Number the people, that I may know the number of the people,* and therefore he endeavours to divert his pride, and in a much more decent manner than he had before endeavoured to divert his passion upon the death of Absalom; then he spoke rudely and insolently, chap. xix. 5. but now, as became him, ver. 3. *Now the Lord thy God add unto the people an hundred fold.* There is no occasion either to tax them or lift them, or make any distribution of them. They are all easy and happy; and it is his wish, both that their number might increase, and that the king, though old, might live to see it, and have the satisfaction of it. *But why doth my lord the king delight in this thing? What need is there of doing it? Pauperis est numerare pecus.* Especially, why should David, who used to speak so much of delighting in God, and in the exercises of devotion, and who, being old, one would think should have put away childish things, take a pleasure (so he calls it modestly, but means taking pride) in a thing of this nature. Note, Many things, not in themselves sinful, turn into sin to us by our inordinate delighting in them. Joab was aware of David's vanity herein, but he himself was not. It would be good for us to have a friend that would faithfully admonish us, when we lay or do any thing proud or vain-glorious, because we often do so, and are not ourselves aware of it.

3. The orders executed notwithstanding. *The king's word prevailed,* ver. 4. he would have it done; Joab must not gainsay it, lest he be thought to grudge his time and pains in the king's service. It is an unhappiness to great men to have those about them that will aid them and serve them in that which is evil. Joab, according to order, applied himself with some reluctance to this unpleasant task, and took the captains of the host to help him. They began in the most distant places; in the east, first, on the other side Jordan, ver. 5. then they went towards Dan in the north, ver. 6. so to Tyre on the east, and thence to Beer-sheba in the south, ver. 7. Above nine months were spent in taking this account, a great deal of trouble and amazement was given by it to the country, ver. 8. and the sum total was at length brought to the king at Jerusalem, ver. 9. whether the numbers answered David's expectations or no, we are not told, nor whether the account fed his pride or mortified it. They were very many, but it may be not so many as he thought they were. They had not increased in Canaan as they had in Egypt, nor were much more than double to what they were when they came into Canaan under Joshua, about four hundred years before, yet it is an evidence that Canaan was a very fruitful land, that so many thousands were maintained within so narrow a compass.

10. ¶ And David's heart smote him, after that he had numbered the people: and David said unto the LORD I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now I beseech thee, O LORD, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly. 11. For when David was up in the morning, the word of the LORD came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, 12. Go and say unto David, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. 13. So Gad came to David, and told him and said unto him, Shall seven years of famine come unto thee and thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days pestilence in the land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me. 14. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the LORD, (for his mercies are great) and let me not fall into the hand of man. 15. So the LORD sent a pestilence upon Israel, from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people from Dan even to Beer-sheba, seventy thousand men. 16. And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshing-place of Araunah the Jebusite. 17. And David spake unto the LORD when he saw the angel that smote the people, and said, Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house.

We have here David repenting of the sin, and yet punished for it; God repenting of the judgment, and David thereby made more penitent.

1. Here is David's penitent reflection upon, and confession of his sin in numbering the people. While the thing was in doing, during all those nine months, we do not find that David was sensible of his sin; for then he would have countermanded the orders he had given, but when the account was finished and laid before him, presently, that very night his conscience was awakened, and he felt the pain of it, just then when he promised himself the pleasure of it. When he was about to feast on the satisfaction of the numbers of his people, it was turned into the gall of asps within him; sense of the sin cast a damp upon the joy, ver. 10. 1. He was convinced of his sin; his heart smote him, before the prophet came to him, (I think it should be read for, ver. 11. but, and when David was up, (so it is in the original) his conscience shewed him the evil of what he had done, now it appeared sin, and exceeding sinful, which before he saw no harm in. He reflected upon it with great regret, and his heart reproached him for it. Note, It is a good thing when a man has sinned, to have a heart within him to smite him for it: it is a good sign of a principle of grace in the heart, and a good step towards repentance and reformation. 2. He confessed it to God, and begged earnestly for the forgiveness of it. (1.) He owns he had sinned, sinned greatly, though to others it might seem no sin at all, or a very little one. True penitents, whose consciences are tender and well informed, see that evil in sin which others do not see. (2.) He owns he had done foolishly, very foolishly, because he had done it in the pride of his heart; and it was folly for him to be proud of the numbers of the people, when they were God's people, not his, and as many as they were God could soon make them fewer. (3.) He cries to God for pardon; *I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant.* If we confess our sins, we may pray in faith that God will forgive them, and take away, by pardoning mercy, that iniquity which we cast away by sincere repentance.

2. The just and necessary correction which he was taken under for this sin. David had been full of tossings to and fro all night under the sense of his sin, no rest in his bones because of it, and he arose in the morning, expecting to hear of God's displeasure against him for what he had done, or designed to speak with Gad his seer concerning it: he is called his seer, because he had him always at hand to advise with him in the things of God, and made use of him as his confessor and counsellor; but God prevented him, and directed the prophet Gad what to say to him, ver. 11. and it is taken for granted, 1. That David must be corrected for his fault; it is too great a crime, and reflects too much dishonour upon God, to go unpunished; even in David himself, of the seven things that God hates, pride is the first, Prov. vi. 17. Note, Those who truly repent of their sins, and have them pardoned, yet are often made too smart for them in this world. 2. The punishment must answer the sin. He was proud of the numbers of his people, and therefore the judgment he must be chastised with for his sin, must be such as will make them fewer. Note, What we make the matter of our pride, it is just with God to take it from us, or immiter it to us, and some way or other make it the matter of our punishment. 3. It must be such a punishment as the people must have a large share in, for God's anger was kindled against Israel, ver. 1. though it was David's sin that immediately plucked up the sluice, the sins of the people all contributed to the deluge.

Now as to the punishment that must be inflicted.

1. David is bid to choose what rod he will be beaten with, ver. 12, 13: his heavenly Father must correct him, but to shew that he doth not do it willingly, he gives David leave to make choice whether it shall be by war, famine, or pestilence, three forejudgments, and which greatly weaken and diminish a people: God, by putting him thus to his choice, designed, 1. To humble him the more for his sin, which he would see to be exceeding sinful, when he came to consider each of these judgments as exceeding dreadful. 2. To upbraid him with the proud conceit he had of his own sovereignty over Israel, he that is so great a prince, begins to think he may have what he will; Come, saith God, then which wilt thou have of these three things? Compare Jer. xxxiv. 17. *I proclim a liberty for you,* but it is such a liberty as this of David's, *to the sword, to the pestilence, to the famine;* and Jer. xv. 2. *Such as are for death to death.* Or, 3. To give him some encouragement under the correction, letting him know that God did not cast him out of communion with himself, but still his secret was with him, and in afflicting him, he considered his frame, and what he could

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best bear. Or, 1. That he might the more patiently bear the rod, when it was a rod of his own choosing. The prophet bids him advise with himself, and tell him what answer he should return to him that sent him. Note, Ministers are sent of God to us, and they must give an account of the success of their embassy; it concerns us therefore to consider, what answer they shall return from us, that they may give up their account of us with joy.

2. He excepts only against the judgment of the sword, and for the other two he refers himself to God, but intimates his choice of the pestilence rather, *ver. 14. I am in a great strait*, and well he might *when fear and the pit, and the snare, are before him*, and if he escape one, he inevitably falls into the other, *Jer. xlvii. 43. 44.* Note, Sin brings men into straits: wife and good men often distress themselves by their own folly. Now, 1. He begs he may not fall into the hand of man; whatever comes, let us not flee three months before our enemies, that will fully all the glory of David's triumphs, and give occasion to the enemies of God and Israel to behave themselves proudly. See *Deut. xxxii. 26, 27.* Their tender mercies are cruel, and in three months they will do that damage to the nation, which many years will not repair. But, 2. He casts himself upon God: *Let us now fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great.* Men are God's hand, so they are called, *Psal. xvii. 14.* the sword of his sending, yet there are some judgments which come more immediately from his hand than others, as famine and pestilence, and which of those shall be the scourge he refers it to God, who chooseth the shortest, that he might the sooner testify his being reconciled. But some think, David, by these words, chose the pestilence. The land had not yet recovered the famine, under which it smarted three years upon the Gibeonites account, and therefore let us not be corrected with that rod, for that allow will be the triumph of our neighbours; hence we read of the reproach of famine, *Ezek. xxxvi. 30.* but, if Israel must be diminished, let it be by the pestilence, for that is falling into the hands of the Lord, who uses to inflict that judgment by the hand of his own immediate servants, the angels, as in the death of the first-born of Egypt. That is a judgment to which David himself, and his own family, he as open as the meanest subject, but not so either to famine or sword, and therefore David in conscience of his guilt, chooseth. Sword and famine will devour one, as well as another, but it may be thought the destroying angel will draw his sword against those who are known to God to be most guilty. This will be of the shortest continuance, and he dreads the thought of lying long under the token of God's displeasure. *It is a dreadful thing*, the apostle saith, *to fall into the hands of the living God*, *Heb. x. 31.* a fearful thing indeed for sinners that have by their impenitency shut themselves out from all hope of his mercy: but David, a penitent, dares cast himself into God's hand, knowing he shall find that *his mercies are great.* Good men, even when they are under God's frowns, yet will entertain no other but good thoughts of him: *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.*

3. A pestilence is accordingly sent, *ver. 15.* which, for the extent of it, spread from Dan to Beer sheba, from one end of the kingdom to the other, which shews it to come immediately from God's hand, and not from any natural causes: David had his choice, he suffers by miracle, and not by ordinary means. For the continuance of it, it lasted from morning (this very morning that it was put to David's choice) to the time appointed, *z. e.* to the third day, so Mr. Pool; or only to the evening of the first day, the time appointed for the evening sacrifice, so Bishop Patrick and others, who reckon that the pestilence lasted but nine hours, and that, in compassion to David, God shortened the time he had first mentioned. The execution the pestilence did was very severe, *there died seventy thousand men*, that were all well, and sick, and dead in a few hours. What a great cry, may we suppose, was there now throughout all the land of Israel, as there was in Egypt when the first-born were slain: but that was at midnight, this in the daytime, *Psal. xci. 6.* See the power of the angels, when God gives them commission, either to save or destroy: Joab is nine months in passing with his pen, the angel but nine hours passing with his sword through all the coasts and corners of the land of Israel. See how easily God can take the proudest sinners by the throat and bring them down, and how much we owe daily to the divine patience. David's adultery is punished for the present only with the death of one infant, his pride with the death of all those thousands so much doth God hate the proud. The number slain amounts almost to a half decimation, seventy thousand was about one in twenty; now we may suppose, David's flesh trembled for fear of God, and he was afraid of his judgments, *Psal. cxix. 120.*

(3.) God's gracious relaxation of the judgment, when it began to be inflicted upon Jerusalem, *ver. 16.* The angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem, as if he intended to do greater execution there than any where else, even to destroy it the country had drunk of the bitter cup, but Jerusalem must drink the dregs: it should seem, that was last numbered, and therefore was referred to be last plagued; perhaps there was more wickedness, especially more pride, (and that was the sin now chastised) in Jerusalem than elsewhere, therefore the hand of the destroyer is stretched out upon that: but then the Lord repented him of the evil, changed not his mind but his way, and laid to the destroying angel, *It is enough, stay now thine hand, and let mercy rejoice against judgment.* Jerusalem shall be spared for the ark's sake, for it is the place, God hath chosen to put his name there. See here how ready God is to forgive, and how little pleasure he takes in punishing, and let it encourage us to meet him by repentance in the way of his judgments. This was on mount Moriah. Dr. Lightfoot observes, that in the very place where Abraham, by a countermand from heaven, was stayed from slaying his son, this angel, by a like countermand, was stayed from destroying Jerusalem. It is for the sake of the great sacrifice that our forfeited lives are preserved from the destroying angel.

(4.) David's renewed repentance for his sin upon this occasion, *ver. 17.* he saw the angel, God opening his eyes for that purpose, saw his sword stretched out to destroy, a flaming sword; saw him ready to sheath it, upon the orders given him to stay proceedings; seeing this he spoke (not to the angel, he knew better things than to address himself to the servant in the presence of the master, or to give that honour to the creature which is the Creator's due) but to the Lord, he said, *Lo, I have sinned.* Note, True penitents, the more they receive of God's (sparing, pardoning mercy, the more humbled they are for sin, and the more resolved against it. *They shall be ashamed when I am pacified towards them*, *Ezek. xvi. 63.* Observe, 1. How he lays a load upon himself, as if he could never speak bad enough of his own fault; *I have sinned, and I have done wickedly*, mine is the crime, and therefore on me be the cross; *Let thy hand be against me and my father's house*; I am the sinner, let me be the sufferer, so willing was he to accept of the punishment of his iniquity, though he was worth ten thousand of them. 2. How he intercedes for the people, whose bitter lamentations made his heart to ache, and his ears to tingle; *these sheep, what have they done?* Done! Why they had done much amiss, it was their sin that provoked God to leave David to himself to do as he did; yet as became a penitent, he is severe upon his own faults, while he extenuates theirs. Most people, when God's judgments are abroad, charge others with being the

cause of them, and care not who falls by them, so they can escape; but David's penitent and public spirit was otherwise affected. Let this mind us of the grace of our Lord Jesus, who gave himself for our sins, was willing God's hand should be against him, that we might escape. The shepherd was smitten that his sheep might be spared.

18. ¶ And Gad came that day to David, and said unto him, Go up, rear an altar unto the LORD, in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. 19. And David according to the saying of Gad, went up, as the LORD commanded. 20. And Araunah looked, and saw the king and his servants coming on toward him; and Araunah went out and bowed himself before the king on his face upon the ground. 21. And Araunah said, Wherefore is my lord the king come to his servant? And David said, To buy the threshing floor of thee to build an altar unto the LORD, that the plague may be stayed from the people. 22. And Araunah said unto David, Let my lord the king take and offer up what seemeth good unto him: behold, here be oxen for burnt sacrifice, and threshing instruments and other instruments of the oxen for wood. 23. All these things did Araunah, as a king, give unto the king, and Araunah laid unto the king, The LORD thy God accept thee: 24. And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price; neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the LORD my God, of that which doth cost me nothing. So David brought the threshing-floor and the oxen, for fifty shekels of silver. 25. And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings; so the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel.

Here is, 1. A command sent to David to erect an altar in the place where he saw the angel, *ver. 18.* This was to intimate to David, 1. That, upon his repeated submission and humiliation, God was now thoroughly reconciled to him, for if the Lord had been pleased to kill him, he would not have accepted an offering, and therefore would not have ordered him to build an altar. God's encouraging us to offer him to spiritual sacrifices, is a comfortable evidence of his reconciling us to himself. 2. That peace is made between God and sinners by sacrifice, and not otherwise, even by Christ the great propitiation, of whom all the legal sacrifices were types. It is for his sake that the destroying angel is bid to stay his hand. 3. That when God's judgments are graciously stayed, we ought to acknowledge it with thankfulness to his praise. This altar was to be for thank-offerings. See *Isa. xii. 1.*

2. The purchase which David made of the ground in order hereunto. It seems the owner was a Jebusite, Araunah by name, profelyted, no doubt, to the Jewish religion, though by birth a Gentile, and therefore allowed not only to dwell among the Israelites, but to have a possession of his own in a city, *Lev. xxv. 29, 30.* The piece of ground was a threshing-floor, a mean place, yet thus dignified; a place of labour, therefore thus dignified. Now, 1. David went in person to the owner to treat with him. See his justice, that he would not so much as use it in the present exigence, though the proprietor was an alien, though himself was a king, and though he had express orders from God to rear an altar there, till he had bought it and paid for it. God hates robbery for burnt-offering. See his humility, how far he was from taking state, though a king, he was now a penitent, and therefore in token of his self abasement, he neither sent for Araunah to come to him, nor sent another to deal with him, but went himself, *ver. 19.* and though it looked like a diminution of himself, he lost no honour by it; Araunah, when he saw him, went and bowed himself to the ground before him, *ver. 20.* Great men will be never the less respected for their humility, but the more.

(2.) Araunah, when he understood his business, *ver. 21.* generously offered him, not only the ground to build his altar on, but oxen for sacrifices, and other things that might be of use to him in the service, *ver. 22.* and all this gratis, and a good prayer into the bargain: *The Lord thy God accept thee!* This he did, 1. Because he had a generous spirit with a great estate. He gave as a king, *ver. 23.* though an ordinary subject, he had the spirit of a prince. In the Hebrew it is, *He gave, even the king to the king*, whence it is supposed that Araunah had been king of the Jebusites in that place; or was descended from their royal family, though now a tributary to David. 2. Because he had a great honour for David, though his conqueror, upon the score of his personal merits, and never thought he could do too much to oblige him. 3. Because he had an affection to Israel, and earnestly desired that the plague might be stayed, and the honour of its being stayed at his threshing-floor, he would account a valuable consideration for all he now tendered to David.

(3.) David resolves to pay the full value for it, and doth so, *ver. 24.* Here were two generous souls well met. Araunah is very willing to give: but David is determined to buy, and for a good reason, he will not offer that to God which cost him nothing. He would not take advantage of the pious Jebusite's generosity to sponge upon him, thanks him, no doubt, for his kind offer, but pays him now fifty shekels of silver, for the floor and the oxen, for the present service, and afterwards six hundred shekels of gold for the ground adjoining, to build the temple on. Note, Those know not what religion is, all whose care it is to make it cheap and easy to themselves, and are best pleased with that which cost them least pains or expence. What have we our substance for, but to honour God with it, and how can it be better bestowed?

3. The building of the altar, and the offering of the proper sacrifices upon it, *ver. 25.* Burnt-offerings to the glory of God's justice in the execution that had been done; and peace-offerings to the glory of his mercy in the seasonable staying of the process. Hereupon God shewed (it is supposed by fire from heaven consuming the sacrifices) that he was intreated for the land, and that it was in mercy that the plague was removed, and in token of God's being reconciled both to prince and people. Christ in our altar, our sacrifice, in him alone we may expect to find favour with God, in escape his wrath, and the sword, the flaming sword of that cherubim, which keeps the way of the tree of life.

A N E X P O S I T I O N, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, Upon the FIRST BOOK of K I N G S.

Many Histories are books of Kings and their reigns, to which the affairs of their kingdoms are reduced; it is a piece of honour that has commonly been paid to crowned heads; the holy Scripture is the history of the kingdom of God among men, under the several administrations of it: but there the king is one, and his name one. The particular history now before us accounts for the affairs of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, yet with special regard to the kingdom of God among them, for still it is a sacred history much more instructive and not less entertaining than any of the histories of the kings of the earth; to which (those of them that are of any certainty it is prior in time; for though there were kings in Edom before there was any king in Israel, *Gen. xxxvi. 31.* foreigners in that point of state got the precedence, yet the history of the kings of Israel lives and will live in holy Writ to the end of the world, when that of the kings of Edom is long since buried in oblivion: for the honour that comes from God is durable, while the honour of the world is like a mushroom, which comes up in a night and perishes in a night.—The Bible began with the story of the Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Judges, men whose converse with heaven was more immediate, the record of which strengthens our faith, but is not so easily accommodated to our case, now we expect not visions, as the subsequent history of affairs like ours, under the direction of common providence; and here also we find, though not many types and figures of the Messiah, yet great expectations of him, for not only prophets but kings desired to see the great Myseries of the Gospel, *Luke x. 24.*—The two books of Samuel are introductions to the books of the Kings, as they relate the original of the royal government in Saul, and of the royal family in David. These two books give us an account of David's successor, Solomon, the division of his kingdom, and the succession of the several kings both of Judah and Israel, with an abstract of their history down to the captivity. And as from the book of Genesis we may collect excellent rules of oeconomics, for the good governing of families; so from these books, of politics, for the directing of public affairs.—There is in these books special regard had to the house and lineage of David, from which Christ came.—Some of his sons trod in his steps, and others did not. The characters of the kings of Judah may be thus briefly given.—David the devout, Solomon the wise, Rehoboam the simple, Abishai the valiant, Aza the upright, Jehoiaphat the religious, Jehoram the wicked, Amaziah the profane, Joash the backslider, Amaziah the rash, Uzziah the mighty, Jotham the peaceable, Ahaz the idolater, Hezekiah the reformer, Manasseh the penitent, Amon the obscure, Josiah the tender-hearted, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, all wicked, and such as brought ruin presently on themselves and their kingdom.—The number of the good and bad is pretty near equal, but the reigns of the good were generally long, and those of the bad short. The consideration of which will make the state of Israel not altogether so bad at this period as at first it seems. In this first book we have, 1. The death of David, *chap. i. and ii.* 2. The glorious reign of Solomon, and his building the temple, *chap. iii.—x.* but the cloud his sun set under, *chap. xi.* 3. The division of the kingdoms in Rehoboam, and his reign and Jeroboam's, *chap. xii.—xiv.* 4. The reigns of Abijah and Aza over Judah, Baasha and Ormi over Israel, *chap. xv. and xvi.* 5. Elijah's miracles, *chap. xvii. xviii. xix.* 6. Ahab's success against Benhadad, his wickedness and fall, *chap. xx.—xxii.* And in all this history it appears, that kings, though gods to us, are men to God, mortal and accountable.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have, (1.) David declining in his health, ver. 1—4. (2.) Adonijah aspiring to the kingdom, and treating his party in order to it, ver. 5—10. (3.) Nathan and Bathsheba contriving to secure the succession to Solomon, and prevailing for an order from David for that purpose, ver. 11—31. (4.) The anointing of Solomon accordingly, and the peoples joy therein, ver. 32—40. (5.) The effectual stop this gave to Adonijah's usurpation, and the dispersion of his party thereupon, ver. 41.—49. (6.) Solomon's dismissal of Adonijah upon his good behaviour, ver. 50—53.

1. **N**OW king David was old, and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat. 2. Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king, a young virgin, and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat. 3. So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunamite, and brought her to the king. 4. And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not.

David in the foregoing chapter, had by the great mercy of God escaped the sword of the destroying angel; but our deliverances from or through difficulties and dangers are but reprieves; if the candle be not blown out, it will burn out of itself. We have David here sinking under the infirmities of old age, and brought by them to the gates of the grave. He that cometh up out of the pit shall fall into the snare; and one way or other we must needs die.

1. It would trouble one to see David so infirm. He was old and his natural heat so wasted, that no clothes could keep him warm, *ver. 1.* David had been a valiant active man, and a man of business, and very vehement had the flame always been in his breast; and yet now his blood is chilled and stagnated, he is confined to his bed, and there can get no heat. He was now seventy years old: Many at that age are as lively and fit for business as ever: but David was now chastised for his former sins, especially that in the matter of Uriah, and felt from his former toils, and the hardships he had gone through, in his youth, which then he made nothing of, but was now the worse for. Let not the strong man glory in his strength, which may soon be weakened by sickness, or at last will be weakened by old age. Let young people remember their Creator in the days of their youth, before these evil days come. What our hands find to do for God, and our souls, and our

generation, let us do it with all our might, because the night comes; the night of old age, in which no man can work; and when our strength is gone, it will be a comfort to remember we used it well.

2. It would trouble one to see his physicians so weak and unskillful, that they knew no other way of relieving him, but by outward applications: No cordials, no spirits, but 1. They covered him with clothes, which, where there is an inward heat, will keep it in, and so increase it; but where it is not, they have none to communicate, no, not royal cloathing. Elihu makes it a difficulty to understand how our garments are warm upon us, *Job. xxxvii. 17.* but if God deny his blessing, men clothe them, and there is none warm, *Hag. i. 6.* David here was not. 2. They ordered him a young bed-fellow, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* A foolish project it was to prescribe nuptials to one that should rather have been preparing for his funeral; but they knew what would gratify their own corruptions, and perhaps were too willing to gratify his, under colour of consulting his health; his prophets should have been consulted as well as his physicians in an affair of this nature. However this might be excused then, when even good men ignorantly allowed themselves in having of many wives. We now have not so learned of Christ, but are taught that one man must have but one wife, *Matt. xix. 5.* And that farther, *It is good for a man not to touch a woman.* 1 Cor. vii. 1. That Abishag was married to David before she lay with him, and was his secondary wife, appears by the imputation of it as a great crime to Adonijah, that he desired him to marry her (*chap. ii. 22.*) after his father's death.

5. ¶ Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king; and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. 6. And his father had not displeased him at any time, in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also was a very goodly man; and his mother bare him after Absalom. 7. And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah, helped him. 8. But Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which belonged to David, were not with Adonijah. 9. And Adonijah slew sheep, and oxen, and fat cattle, by the stone of Zoheleth, which is by En-rogel, and called all his brethren the king's sons, and all the men of Judah, the king's servants. 10. But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, they called not.

David had much affliction in his children; Amnon and Absalom, had both been his grief; the one his first-born, the other his third (2 Sam. iii. 2, 3.

2, 3.) his second who he had by Abigail, we will suppose he had comfort in; his fourth was Adonijah, (2 Sam. iii. 4.) he was one of those that was born in Hebron; we have heard nothing of him till now, and here we are told, that he was a pretty comely gentleman, and that he was next in age, and (as it proved) next in temper to Absalom, *ver. 6.* And farther, that in his father's eyes he had been a jewel, but was now a thorn.

1. His father had made a fondling of him, *ver. 6.* He had not displeased him at any time. It is not said he never displeased his father; it is likely he had done so many a time, and his father was secretly troubled at his miscarriages, and lamented them before God: But his father had not displeased him, either by crossing him in his humours, or denying him any thing he had a mind to, or by calling him to an account for what he had done, and where he had been, or by keeping him to his book or his business, or reproving him for what he saw or heard of, that he did amiss; he never said to him, why hast thou done so? because he saw it was uneasy to him, and he could not bear it without fretting. It was the son's fault that he was displeased at reproof, and took it for an affront, wherefore he lost the benefit of it: And it was the father's fault, that because he saw it displeased him, he did not reprove him; and now he justly smarted for indulging him.—They that honour their sons more than God, as they do who keep them not under a good discipline, thereby forfeit the honour they might expect from their sons.

2. He in return made a fool of his father: because he was old and confined to his bed, he thought no notice was to be taken of him, and therefore *exalted himself*, and said, *I will be king*, *ver. 5.* Children that are indulged, learn to be proud and ambitious, and that is the ruin of a great many young people: The way to keep them humble, is to keep them under.—Observe Adonijah's insolence. 1. He looks upon the days of mourning for his father to be at hand, and therefore he prepares to succeed him, though he knew that by designation both of God and David, Solomon was to be the man, for public notice had been given of it by David himself, and the succession settled as it were by act of parliament, in pursuance of God's appointment, 1 *Chron. xxi. 9.—xxiii.* This entail Adonijah attempted by force to cut off, in contempt both of God and his father. Thus is this kingdom of Christ opposed, and there are those that say, we will not have him to reign over us. 2. He looks upon his father as superannuated, and good for nothing, and therefore he enters immediately upon the possession of the throne: He cannot wait till his father's head be laid, but it must now be laid, Adonijah reigns, *ver. 19.* and God save king Adonijah, *ver. 25.* His father is not fit to govern, for he is old and past it; nor Solomon for he is young, and not come to it; and therefore Adonijah will take it upon him. It argues a very base and wicked mind for children to insult over their parents, because of the infirmities of their age.

In pursuance of this ambitious prospect, 1. He got a great retinue, *ver. 5.* Chariots and horsemen; both for state and strength; to wait on him, and to fight for him. 2. He made a great interest, with no less than Joab, the general of the army, and Abiathar the high-priest, *ver. 7.* That he should make his court to those, who, by their influence in church and camp, were capable of doing him great service, is not strange; but we may well wonder by what arts they could be drawn to follow him, and help him. They were old men, that had been faithful to David, in the most difficult and troublesome of his times; men of sense and experience, that one would think should not easily be wheedled: They could not propose any advantage to themselves by it, for they were both at the top of their preferment, and stood fast in it. They could not be ignorant of the entail of the crown upon Solomon, which it was not in their power to cut off, and whom therefore it was their interest to oblige: But God in this matter left them to themselves, perhaps to correct them for some former miscarriages, with a rod of their own making. We are told, *ver. 8.* who they were, that were of such approved fidelity to David, that Adonijah had not the confidence so much as to propose it to them, Zadok, Benaiah, and Nathan. A man that has given proofs of his resolute adherence to that which is good, shall not be asked to do an ill thing. 3. He prepared a great entertainment, (*ver. 9.*) at En-rogel, not far from Jerusalem: his guests were the king's son, and the king's servants, whom he feasted and caressed, to bring them over to his party; but Solomon was not invited, either because he despised him, or because he depared of him, *ver. 10.* Such as serve their own belly, and will be in the interest of those that will feast them, what side soever they are of, are an easy prey to seducers, *Rom. xvi. 18.* Some think Adonijah flew these sheep and oxen, even fat ones for sacrifice, and that it was a religious feast he made, beginning his usurpation with a shew of devotion, as Absalom, under the colour of a vow, 2 *Sam. xv. 7.* which he might do the more plausibly when he had the high-priest himself on his side. It is pity any occasion should ever be given to say, *In nomine domine incipit omne malum*; and that religious exercises should be made to patronize unrighteous practices.

11. ¶ Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bath-sheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not? 12. Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee, give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon. 13. Go, and get thee in unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? why then doth Adonijah reign? 14. Behold, while thou yet talkest there with the king, I also will come in after thee, and confirm thy words. 15. ¶ And Bath-sheba went in unto the king; into the chamber: and the king was very old; and Abishag the Shunammite ministered unto the king. 16. And Bath-sheba bowed, and did obeisance unto the king; and the king said, What wouldest thou? 17. And she said unto him, My lord, thou sweardest by the LORD thy God unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly, Solomon thy Son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne. 18. And now, Behold, Adonijah reigneth: and now, my lord the king, thou knowest it not: 19. And he hath slain oxen and fat cattle, and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host: but Solomon thy servant hath he not called. 20. And thou,

No. I.

my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. 21. Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders. 22. ¶ And lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in. 23. And they told the king, saying, Behold Nathan the prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground. 24. And Nathan said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? 25. For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen, and fat cattle, and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the priest; and behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, God save king Adonijah. 26. But me, even me thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon, hath he not called, 27. Is this thing done by my lord the king, and thou hast not shewed it unto thy servant, who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him? 28. ¶ Then king David answered and said, Call me Bath-sheba: and she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king. 29. And the king sware, and said, As the LORD liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, 30. Even as I sware unto thee by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day. 31. Then Bath-sheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.

We have here the effectual endeavours that were used by Nathan and Bath-sheba, to obtain from David a ratification of Solomon's succession, for the crushing of Adonijah's usurpation. 1. David himself knew of what was doing. Disobedient children, think they are well enough, if they can but keep their good old parents ignorant of their ill courses; but a *bird of the air will carry the voice*. 2. Bath-sheba lived retired, and knew nothing of it till Nathan informed her. Many yet get very comfortably through this world, that know little how the world goes. 3. Solomon it is likely knew of it, but was as a deaf man that heard not. Though he had years, and wisdom above his years, yet we do not find that he stirred to oppose Adonijah, but quietly composed himself, and left it to God and his friends to order the matter. Hence David in his Psalm for Solomon observes, that while men in pursuit of the world in vain rise early, and sit up late, God giveth his beloved (his Jeddiah) sleep, in giving them to be easy, and gain their point without ado, *Psal. cxxvii. 1, 2.* How then is the design brought about?

1. Nathan the prophet alarms Bath-sheba, possessed her with the case, and puts her in a way to get an order from the king, for the confirming of Solomon's title. He was concerned, because he knew God's mind, and David's and Israel's interest, it was by him that God had named Solomon Jeddiah, 2 *Sam. xii. 25.* and therefore he could not sit still and see the throne usurped, which he knew was his right, by the will of him from whom promotion cometh. When crowns were disposed of by immediate direction from heaven, no marvel that prophets were so much interested and employed in that matter; but now it is common providence that rules the affairs of the kingdom of men, *Dan. iv. 32.* the subordinate agency must be left to common persons, and let not prophets intermeddle in them, but keep to the affairs of the kingdom of God among men.—Nathan applies himself to Bath-sheba, as one that had the greatest concern for Solomon, and could have the freest access to David. He acquaints her with Adonijah's attempt, *ver. 11.* and that it was not with David's consent or privity. He suggests to her, that not only Solomon was in danger of losing the crown, but that he and she too were in danger of losing their lives, if Adonijah prevailed. A humble spirit may be indifferent to a crown, and may be content, notwithstanding the prospect of it, to sit down short of the possession of it: But the law of self-preservation, and the sixth commandment, obliges us to use all possible endeavours to secure our own life and the lives of others. Now, saith Nathan, let me give thee counsel how to save thine own life, and the life of thy son, *ver. 12.* Such as this is the counsel that Christ's ministers give us in his name, to give all diligence, not only that no man take our crown, *Rev. iii. 11.* but that we save our lives, even the lives of our souls.—He directs her, *ver. 13.* to go to the king, to mind him of his word and oath, that Solomon should be his successor; and to ask him in the most humble manner, *Why doth Adonijah reign?* He thought David was not so cold, but this would warm him. Conscience, as well as sense of honour, would put life into him upon such an occasion as this; and he promiseth, *ver. 14.* that while she was reasoning with the king upon this matter, he could come in and second her, as if accidentally, which perhaps the king might look upon as a special providence, (and he was one that took notice of such evidence, 1 *Sam. xxv. 32, 33.*) or however it would help to awaken him so much the more.

2. Bath-sheba, according to his advice and direction, loses no time, but presently makes her application to the king, on the same errand that Esther came on to king Ahasuerus, to intercede for her life. She needed not wait for a call, as Esther did, she knew she should be welcome at any time; but it is taken notice of that, when she visited the king, Abishag was ministering unto him, *ver. 15.* and Bath-sheba took no displeasure either at him or her for it.—Also, that she bowed, and did obeisance to the king, *ver. 16.* in token of her respect to him, both as her prince and as her husband; such a genuine daughter of Sarah was she, that obeyed Abraham calling him lord. They that would find favour with superiors, must shew them reverence, and be dutiful to those who they expect should be kind to them. Her address to the king on this occasion is very discreet. 1. She minds him of his promise made to her, and confirmed with a solemn oath, that Solomon should succeed him, *ver. 17.* She knew how fast this would hold such a conscientious man as David was. 2. She informs him of Adonijah's attempt, which he was ignorant of, *ver. 18.* Adonijah reigns in competition with thee for

the present, and in contradiction to thy promise for the future. The fault is not thine, for thou knowest it not; but now thou knowest it, thou wilt, in pursuance of thy promise, take care to suppress it. She tells him who were his guests, and who were in his interest, but *Solomon thy servant has he not called*, which plainly shews he looks upon him as his rival, and aims to undermine him, ver. 19. It is not an oversight, but a contempt of the act of settlement, that Solomon is neglected. 3. She pleads that it was very much in his power to obviate this mischief, ver. 20. *The eyes of all Israel are upon thee*, not only as a king, for we cannot suppose it the prerogative of any prince to bequeath his subjects by will, as it they were his goods and chattels, to whom he pleaseth, but as a prophet; all Israel knew that David was not only himself *the anointed of the God of Jacob*, but that the *Spirit of the Lord spake by him*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1, 2. and therefore waiting for and depending upon a divine designation, in a matter of such importance, David's word would be an oracle and a law to them; this therefore (saith Bath-sheba) they expect, and it will end the controversy, and effectually quash all Adonijah's pretensions. *A divine sentence is in the lips of the king*. Note, Whatever power, interest, or influence men have, they ought to improve it to the utmost, for the preserving and advancing of the kingdom of the Messiah, of which Solomon's kingdom was a type. 4. She suggests the imminent peril which she and her son would be in if this matter was not settled in David's life-time, ver. 21. If Adonijah prevail, as he is like enough to do, (having Joab the general, and Abiathar the high-priest on his side) unless timely suppressed, Solomon, and all his friends will be looked upon as traitors, and dealt with accordingly; usurpers are most cruel. If Adonijah had got into the throne, he would not have dealt so fairly with Solomon, as Solomon did with him. Those, who against right force their entrance, it is at their utmost peril whoever stand in their way.

3. Nathan the prophet, according to the promise, seasonably stepped in and seconded her while she was speaking, before the king had given his answer, lest, if he had heard Bath-sheba's representation only, his answer should have been dilatory, and only that he would consider of it: but out of the mouth of two witnesses, two such witnesses, the word would be established, and he would immediately give positive orders. The king is told that Nathan the prophet is come to work upon him, and he is sure to be always welcome to the king, especially, when either he is not well, or hath any great affair upon his thoughts, for in either case a prophet will be in a particularly manner serviceable to him. Nathan knows he must render honour to whom honour is due, and therefore pays the king the same respect now he finds him sick in bed, that he would have done, if he had found him on his throne, he bowed himself with his face to the ground, ver. 23. Now he deals a little more roundly with the king than Bath-sheba had done, in which his character would support him, and the present languor of the king's spirits, made it necessary they should be roused. 1. He makes the same representation of Adonijah's attempt that Bath-sheba had made, ver. 25, 26. adding, that his party were already got to that height of assurance, as to shout *God save king Adonijah*, as if king David were already dead, taking notice also, that they had not invited him to their feast, *me thy servant has he not called*; thereby intimating, that they resolved not to consult either God or David in the matter, for to them both Nathan was a *severioribus consiliis*, intimately acquainted with their mind. 2. He makes David sensible how much he was concerned to clear himself from having a hand in it. *Hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me?* ver. 24. And again, ver. 27. *Is this thing done by my lord the king?* If it be, he is not so faithful either to God's word or to his own, as we all took him to be; if it be not, it is high time we witness against the usurpation, and declare Solomon his successor. If it be, why is not Nathan made acquainted with it, who is not only in general the king's confidant, but is particularly concerned in this matter, having been employed to notify to David the mind of God, concerning the succession; but if my lord the king knows nothing of the matter, (as certainly he doth not) what daring insolence is Adonijah and his party guilty of? Thus he endeavours to incense David against them, that he might act the more vigorously for the support of Solomon's interest. Note, Good men would do their duty if they were minded of it, and put upon it, and told what occasion there is for them to appear: and those, who thus are their remembrancers do them a real kindness, as Nathan here did to David.

4. David hereupon made a solemn declaration of his firm adherence to his former resolution, that Solomon should be his successor; Bath-sheba is called in, ver. 28. and to her, and acting for and on the behalf of her son, the king gives these fresh assurances. 1. He repeats his former promise and oath, owns that he had sworn unto her by the Lord God of Israel, that Solomon should reign after him, ver. 30. Though he be old, and his memory begins to fail him, yet he remembers this. Note, An oath is so sacred a thing, that the obligations of it cannot be broken, and so solemn a thing, that the impressions of it, one would think, cannot be forgotten. 2. He ratifies it with another, because the occasion called for it. *As the Lord liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, even so will I certainly do this day*, without dispute, without delay. His form of swearing seems to be what he commonly used on solemn occasions, for we find it, 2 Sam. iv. 9. And it carries in it, a grateful acknowledgment of the goodness of God to him, in bringing him safe through the many difficulties and hardships which had lain in his way; and which he now makes mention of to the glory of God, as Jacob, when he lay a dying, Gen. xlviii. 16. Thus settling to his seal, from his own experience, that that was true which the Spirit of the Lord spake by him, *Psal. xxxiv. 22. The Lord redeemed the soul of his servant*. Dying saints ought to be witnesses for God, and speak of him as they have found. Perhaps, he speaks thus on this occasion for the encouragement of his son and successor, to trust in God in the distresses he also might meet with.

Bath-sheba receives these assurances, (ver. 31.) 1. With great complaisance to the king's person, she did reverence to him, while Adonijah and his party affronted him. 2. With hearty good wishes to the king's health, *let him live*. So far was she from thinking he lived too long, that she prayed he might live for ever, if it were possible, to adorn the crown he wore, and to be a blessing to his people. We should earnestly desire the prolonging of useful lives, however it may be the postponing of any advantages of our own.

32. ¶ And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king. 33. The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon. 34. And let Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon.

35. Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel; and over Judah. 36. And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, and said, Amen: the LORD God of my lord the king say so too. 37. As the LORD hath been with my lord the king, even so be he with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David. 38. So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down, and caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon. 39. And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon: and they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, God save king Solomon. 40. And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them.

We have here the effectual care David took, both to secure Solomon's right, and to preserve the public peace, by crushing Adonijah's project in the bud. Observe,

1. The express orders he gave for the proclaiming of Solomon. The persons he intrusted with this great affair, were Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah, men of power and interest, whom David had always reposed a confidence in, and found faithful to him, and whom Adonijah had passed by in his invitation, ver. 10. David orders them forthwith, with all the solemnity that might be, to proclaim Solomon, they must take with them *the servants of their lord*, the life-guards, and all the servants of the household: they must let Solomon on the mule the king used to ride, for he kept not such stables of horses as his son afterwards did; he appoints them whither to go, ver. 32. and ver. 34, 35. what to do. 1. Zadok and Nathan, the two ecclesiastical persons, must in God's name anoint him king: for though he was not the first of the family, as Saul and David were, yet he was a younger son, was made king by divine appointment, and his title was contested, which made it necessary, that hereby it should be settled. This unction was typical of the designation and qualification of the Messiah, or Christ, the anointed one, to whom the Spirit, that oil of gladness, was poured without measure. *Heb. i. 9. Psal. lxxix. 20.* And all good christians, being heirs of the kingdom, (Jam. ii. 5.) do from him receive the anointing, 1 John ii. 27. 2. The great officers, civil and military, are ordered to give public notice of this, and to express the public joy upon this occasion, by sound of trumpet, by which the law of Moses directed the gracing of great solemnities, to this must be added, the acclamations of the people, *Let king Solomon live*, let him prosper, let his kingdom be established and perpetuated, and let him long continue in the enjoyment of it; so it had been promised concerning him, *Psal. lxxii. 15. He shall live*. 3. They must then bring him in state into the city of David, and he must sit upon the throne of his father, as his substitute now, or vice-roy, to dispatch public business during his weakness, and be his successor after his death; *he shall be king in his stead*. It would be a great satisfaction to David himself, and to all parties concerned, to have this done presently, that, upon the demise of the king, there might be no dispute or any ruffle in the public affairs. David was far from grudging his successor the honour of appearing so in his life-time, and yet perhaps was so taken up with his devotions on his sick bed that if he had not been put in mind of it by others, this great good work, which was so necessary to the public repose, had been left undone.

2. The great satisfaction which Benaiah in the name of the rest professed in these orders. The king said, Solomon shall reign for me, and reign after me, Amen, (saith Benaiah very heartily) as the king saith, so say we, we are all entirely satisfied in the nomination, and concur in the choice, we give our vote for Solomon, *nemine contradicente*; and since we can bring nothing to pass, much less establish it, without the concurrence of a propitious providence, *The Lord God of my lord the king say so too* ver. 36. This is the language of his faith in that promise of God on which Solomon's government was founded. If we say as God saith in his word, we may hope that he will say as we say by his providence. To this, he adds a prayer for Solomon, ver. 37. That God would be with him as he had been with David, and make his throne greater; he knew David was none of those that envy their children greatness, and therefore that he would not be disquieted at this prayer, nor take it as an affront, but would heartily say Amen to it. The wisest and best man in the world desires his children may be wiser and better than he, for he himself desires to be wiser and better than he is; and wisdom and goodness are true greatness.

3. The immediate execution of these orders, ver. 38, 39, 40. No time was lost, but Solomon was brought in state to the place appointed, and there Zadok, (who, though he was not as yet high-priest, was, we may suppose, the Suffragan, the Jews called him the Sagan, or second-priest) anointed him, by the direction of Nathan the prophet and David the king, ver. 39. In the tabernacle, where the ark was now lodged, was kept, among other sacred things, the holy oil for many religious services, thence Zadok took a horn of oil, which notes both power and plenty, and thereupon anointed Solomon. We do not find that Abiathar pretended to anoint Adonijah, he was made king by a feast, not by an unction; whom God calls he will qualify, which was signified by the anointing; usurpers had it not. Christ signifies anointed, and he is the king whom God hath set upon his holy hill of Zion, according to the decree, *Psal. ii. 6, 7. Christians also are made to our God, (and by him) kings, and they have an unction from the holy One*, 1 John ii. 20.

The people hereupon expressed their great joy and satisfaction in the elevation of Solomon, surrounded him with their Hosannas; *God save king Solomon*, and attended him with their music and shouts of joy, ver. 40. Hereby they declared their concurrence in the choice, and that he was not forced upon them, but cheerfully accepted by them. The power of a prince can be little satisfaction to himself, unless he knows it to be a satisfaction to his people. Every Israelite indeed rejoiceth in the exaltation of the son of David.

41. ¶ And Adonijah and all the guests that were with him, heard it as they had made an end of eating: and when Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said, Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar? 42. And while he yet spake, behold, Jonathan the son

of Abiathar the priest came, and Adonijah said unto him, Come in, for thou art a valiant man, and bringest good tidings. 43. And Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, Verily our lord king David hath made Solomon king. 44. And the king hath sent with him Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and they have caused him to ride upon the king's mule. 45. And Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, have anointed him king in Gihon: and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again: this is the noise that ye have heard. 46. And also Solomon sitteth on the throne of the kingdom. 47. And moreover, the king's servants came to bless our lord king David, saying, God make the name of Solomon better than thy name, and make his throne greater than thy throne: and the king bowed himself upon the bed. 48. And also thus said the king, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which hath given one to fit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it. 49. And all the guests that were with Adonijah, were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way. 50. ¶ And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. 51. And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah feareth king Solomon, for lo, he hath caught hold on the horns of the altar, saying, Let king Solomon swear unto me to-day, that he will not slay his servant with the sword. 52. And Solomon said, If he will shew himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die. 53. So king Solomon sent and they brought him down from the altar; and he came and bowed himself to king Solomon: and Solomon said unto him, Go to thine house.

Here is, 1. The tidings of Solomon's inauguration brought to Adonijah and his party, in the midst of their jollity. *They had made an end of eating*, and it should seem, it was a great while before they made an end, for all the affair of Solomon's anointing was ordered, done and finished, while they were at dinner glutting themselves. Thus they who *serve not our Lord Christ*, but oppose him, are commonly such as *serve their own belly*, Rom. xvi. 18. and make a god of that, Phil. iii. 19. Their long feast intimates likewise that they were very secure and confident of their interest, else they would not have lost so much time. The old world and Sodom were *eating and drinking*, secure and sensual, when their destruction came, Luke xvii. 26. &c. When they had made an end of eating, and were preparing themselves to proclaim their king and bring him in triumph into their city, they heard the sound of the trumpet, ver. 41. and a dreadful sound it was in their ears. Job xv. 21. Joab was an old man, and was alarmed at it, apprehending the city to be in an uproar; but Adonijah is very confident that the messenger, being a worthy man, brings good tidings, ver. 42. Usurpers flatter themselves with the hopes of success, and those are commonly least timorous, whose condition is most dangerous. But how can those who do ill things expect to have good tidings? No, the worthiest man will bring them the worst news, as the priest's son did here to Adonijah, ver. 43. Verily, the best tidings I have to bring you is, that Solomon is made king, so that your pretensions are all qualified.

He relates to them very particularly, 1. With what great solemnity Solomon was made king, ver. 44, 45. and that he was now sitting on the throne of the kingdom, ver. 46. Adonijah thought to have slept into the throne before him, but Solomon was too quick for him. 2. With what general satisfaction Solomon was made king, so that which was done was not likely to be undone again. (1.) The people were pleased, you have their joyful acclamations, ver. 45. (2.) The courtiers are pleased; *The king's servants attended him with an address of congratulation upon this occasion*, ver. 47. We have here the heads of their address, they blessed king David, applauded his prudent care for the public welfare, acknowledged their happiness under his government, and prayed heartily for his recovery. They also prayed for Solomon, that God would make his name better than his father's, which it might well be when he had his father's foundation to build upon; a child on a giant's shoulders is taller than the giant himself. (3.) The king himself is pleased, he bowed himself upon the bed, not only to signify his acceptance of his servants address, but to offer up his own address to God, ver. 48. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who, as Israel's God, for Israel's good, has brought this matter to such a happy issue, mine eyes even seeing it. Note, It is a great satisfaction to good men when they are going out of the world, to see the affairs of their families in a good posture, their children rising up in their stead to serve God and their generation, and especially to see peace upon Israel, and the establishment of it.

2. The effectual crush which this gave to Adonijah's attempt, it spoiled their sport, dispersed their company, and obliging every man to shift for his own safety. *The triumphing of the wicked is short*. It was a castle in the air that they were building, which having no foundation would soon come down about their ears; they were afraid of being taken in the manner, (as we say) while they were together hatching their treason, and therefore each one made the best of his way.

3. The terror Adonijah himself was in, and the course he took to secure himself; he was not so much elevated, ver. 42. but he is as much sunk, ver. 50. he had despised Solomon, as not worthy to be his guest, ver. 10. but now he dreads him as his judge; he feared because of Solomon. Thus they who oppose Christ and his kingdom will shortly be made to tremble before him, and call in vain to rocks and mountains to shelter them from his wrath. He took hold on the horns of the altar, which was always looked upon as a sanctuary or place of refuge, Exod. xxi. 14. intimating hereby, that he durst not stand a trial, but threw himself upon the mercy of his prince, in suing for which he relied upon no other plea but only the mercy of God, which was manifested in the institution and acceptance of the sacrifices that were offered on the altar, and the remission of sin thereupon. Perhaps Adonijah had formerly slighted the service of the altar, yet now he courts the protection of it. Many, that in the day of their security neglect

the great salvation, under the arrests of the terrors of the Lord would gladly be beholden to Christ and his merit, and, when it is too late, will catch hold on the horns of that altar.

4. His humble address to Solomon for mercy. By those who brought Solomon tidings where he was, he sent a request for his life, ver. 51. *Let king Solomon swear to me that he will not slay his servant*. He owns Solomon for his prince, and himself his servant, dares not justify himself, but makes supplication to his judge. It was a great change with him; he that in the morning was grasping at a crown, is before night begging for his life. Then Adonijah reigns, now Adonijah trembles, and cannot think himself safe, unless Solomon promise with an oath not to put him to death.

7. The orders Solomon gave concerning him. He discharged him upon his good behaviour, ver. 52, 53. he considers he is his brother, it was his first offence, perhaps, being so soon made sensible of his error, and then not persisting in his rebellion, he might prove not only a peaceable but a serviceable subject, and therefore, if he will approve himself well for the future, what is past shall be pardoned; but if he be found disaffected, turbulent and aspiring, this offence shall be remembered against him, he shall be called up upon his former conviction, (as our law speaks) and execution awarded against him. Thus the son of David receives those to mercy that have been rebellious, if they will return to their allegiance and be faithful to their sovereign, their former crimes shall not be mentioned against them; but if they still continue in the interests of the world and the flesh, that will be their ruin. Adonijah is sent for, and told upon what terms he stands, which he signifies his grateful submission to, and then is bid to go to his house, and live retired there: Solomon not only gave him his life but his estate, thus establishing his throne by mercy.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter we have David setting, and Solomon at the same time rising. 1. The conclusion of David's reign with his life. (1.) The charge he gives to Solomon upon his death bed, in general to serve God, ver. 1—3. in particular concerning Joab, Barzillai, and Shimei, ver. 5—9. (2.) His death and burial, and the years of his reign, ver. 10, 11. 2. The beginning of Solomon's reign, ver. 12. Though he was to be a prince of peace, he began his reign with some remarkable acts of justice. (1.) Upon Adonijah, whom he put to death for his aspiring pretensions, ver. 13—25. (2.) Upon Abiathar, whom he deposed from the high priesthood for siding with Adonijah, ver. 26, 27. (3.) Upon Joab, whom he put to death for his late treason and former murders, ver. 28—35. (5.) Upon Shimei, whom, for cursing David, he confined to Jerusalem, ver. 36—38. And three years after, for transgressing the rules put him to death, ver. 39—46.

1. NOW the days of David drew nigh, that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son saying, 2. I go the way of all the earth, be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man. 3. And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou dost, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: 4. That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth, with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel. 5. Moreover, thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet, 6. Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace. 7. But shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother. 8. And behold, thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse, in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I swore to him by the LORD, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. 9. Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood. 10. So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David. 11. And the days that David reigned over Israel, were forty years: seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he in Jerusalem.

David, that great and good man, is here a dying man, ver. 1. and a dead man, ver. 10. It is well there is another life after this, for death stains all the glory of this, and lays it in the dust. We have here,

1. The charge and instructions which David, when he was dying, gave to Solomon his son and declared successor. He feels himself declining, and is not backward to own it, nor afraid to speak or hear of dying: *I go the way of all the earth*, ver. 2. Hebrew, *I am walking in it*. Note, 1. Death is a way; not only a period of this life, but a passage to a better. 2. It is the way of all the earth, of all mankind who dwell on earth, and are themselves earth, and therefore must return to their earth. Even the sons and heirs of heaven must go the way of all the earth, they must needs die; but they walk with pleasure in this way, through the valley of the shadow of death; Psalm

Psalms xliii. 4. Prophets, and even kings, must go this way to brighter light and honour than prophecy or sovereignty. David is going this way, and therefore gives Solomon directions what to do.

(1.) He chargeth him in general to keep God's commandments, and to make conscience of his duty, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* He prescribes to him, 1. A good rule to act by, the divine will; govern thyself by that. David's charge to him is, to keep the charge of the Lord his God. The authority of a dying father is much, but nothing to that of a living God. There are great trusts which we are charged with by the Lord our God, let us keep them carefully, as those that must give an account; and excellent statutes, which we must be ruled by, let us also keep them. The written word is our rule; Solomon must himself do as was written in the law of Moses. 2. A good spirit to act with. *Be strong and shew thyself a man*, though in years but a child. Those that would keep the charge of the Lord their God must put on resolution. 3. Good reason for all this. This would effectually conduce, (1.) To the prosperity of his kingdom; it is the way to prosper in all thou doest, and to succeed with honour and satisfaction in every undertaking. (2.) To the perpetuity of it. *That the Lord may continue*, and to confirm, his word which he spake concerning me. Those that rightly value the treasure of the promise, that sacred depositum, cannot but be solicitous to preserve the entail of it, and very desirous that those who come after them may do nothing to cut it off. Let each in their own age successively keep God's charge; and then God will be sure to continue his word. We never let fall the promise, till we let fall the precept. God had promised David that the Messiah should come from his loins, and that promise was absolute; but the promise, that there should not fail him a man on the throne of Israel, was conditional; if his seed behave themselves as they should. If Solomon, in his day, fulfil the condition, he doth his part towards the perpetuating of the promise. The condition is, that he walk before God in all his institutions, in sincerity, with zeal and resolution; and in order hereunto, that he take heed to his way. In order to our constancy in religion, nothing more necessary than caution and circumspection.

(2.) He gives him directions concerning some particular persons, what to do with them, that he might make up his deficiencies in justice to some and kindness to others.

1. Concerning Joab, *ver. 5.* David was now conscious to himself that he had not done well to spare him, when he had made himself once and again obnoxious to the law, by the murder of Abner first, and afterwards of Amasa, both of them great men, captains of the hosts of Israel; he slew them treacherously, shed the blood of war in peace; and injuriously to David; thou knowest what he did to me therein. The murder of a subject is a wrong to the prince, it is a loss to him, and is against the peace of our sovereign lord the king. These murders were particularly against David, reflecting upon his reputation, he being at that time in treaty with them, and hazarding his interest, which they were very capable of serving. Magistrates are the avengers of the blood of those they have the charge of. It aggravated Joab's crime, that he was neither ashamed of the sin nor afraid of the punishment, but daringly wore the girdle and shoes that were stained with innocent blood, in defiance of the justice both of God and the king. David refers him to Solomon's wisdom, *ver. 6.* with an intimation that he left him to his justice. Say not, he has an hoary head, it is pity it should be cut off, for it will shortly fall of itself; no, let it not go down to the grave in peace. Though he has been long reprieved, he shall be reckoned with at last, time doth not wear out the guilt of any sin, particularly not of murder.

2. Concerning Barzillai's family, whom he orders him to be kind to for Barzillai's sake, who, we may suppose, by this time was dead, *ver. 7.* When David upon his death-bed was remembering the injuries that had been done, he could not forget the kindnesses that had been shewn, but leaves it as a charge upon his son to return them. Note, The kindnesses we have received from our friends must not be buried, either in their graves or ours, but our children must return them to theirs. Hence, perhaps, Solomon fetched that rule, *Prov. xxvii. 10. Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not.* Paul prays for the house of Onesiphorus, who had often refreshed him.

3. Concerning Shimei, *ver. 8, 9.* 1. His crime is remembered; He cursed with a grievous curse, and the more grievous, because he insulted him when he was in misery, and poured vinegar into his wounds. The Jews say, that one thing which made this a grievous curse, was that beside all that is mentioned, 2 Sam. xvi. Shimei upbraided him with his descent from Ruth the Moabitess. 2. His pardon is not forgotten. David owns he had sworn to him that he would not himself put him to death, because he seasonably submitted, and cried *peccavi*; and he was not willing, especially at this juncture, to use the sword of public justice for the avenging of wrongs done to himself. But, 3. His case as it now stands, is left with Solomon, as one that knew what was fit to be done, and would do as he found occasion. David intimates to him, that his pardon was not designed to be perpetual, but only a reprieve for David's life; *hold him not guiltless*: Do not think him any true friend to thee or thy government, nor fit to be trusted; he has no less malice than he had then, though he has more wit to conceal it. He is still a debtor to the public justice for what he did then; and though I promised him that I would not put him to death, I never promised that my successor should not. His turbulent spirit will soon give thee an occasion, which thou shouldest not fail to take, for the bringing of his hoary head to the grave with blood. This proceeded not from personal revenge, but the prudent zeal for the honour of the government, and the covenant God had made with his family, the contempt of which ought not to go unpunished. Even a hoary head, if a guilty and forfeited head, ought not to be any man's protection from justice. The sinner, being a hundred years old, shall be accursed, *Isa. lxv. 20.*

2. David's death and burial, *ver. 10.* He was buried in the city of David, not in the burying place of his father, as Saul was, but in his own city, which he was the founder of. There were set the thrones, and there the tombs of the house of David. Now, David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell asleep, and was laid to his fathers, and saw corruption, *Acts xiii. 36.* and see *Acts ii. 39.* His epitaph may be taken from 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. Here lies David the son of Jesse, the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the Lord of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel; adding his own words, *Psalms xvi. 9. My flesh also shall rest in hope.* Josephus saith, that besides the usual magnificence with which his son Solomon buried him, he put into his sepulchre a vast deal of money; and that 1300 years after (so he reckons) it was opened by Hircanus the high priest, in the time of Antiochus, and 3000 talents taken out for the public service. The years of his reign are here computed, *ver. 11.* to be forty years; the odd six months, which he reigned above seven years in Hebron, are not reckoned, but the even sum only.

12. ¶ Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was established greatly.

13. ¶ And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, and she said, Comest

thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably. 14. He said moreover, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And she said, Say on. 15. And he said, Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me: that I should reign: howbeit, the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's: for it was his from the LORD. 16. And now I ask one petition of thee, deny me not. And she said unto him, Say on. 17. And he said, Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king (for he will not say thee nay) that he give me Abishag the Shunammite to wife. 18. And Bathsheba said, Well, I will speak for thee unto the king. 19. ¶ Bathsheba therefore went unto king Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah: and the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand. 20. Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee, I pray thee say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother, for I will not say thee nay. 21. And she said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife. 22. And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also; (for he is mine elder brother) even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah. 23. Then king Solomon sware by the LORD, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life. 24. Now therefore, as the LORD liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me an house as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day. 25. And king Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he fell upon him that he died.

Here is, 1. Solomon's accession to the throne, *ver. 12.* He came to it much more easily and peaceably than David did, and much sooner saw his government established. It is happy for a kingdom when the end of one good reign is the beginning of another, as it was here.

2. His just and necessary removal of Adonijah his rival, in order to the establishment of his throne. Adonijah had made some bold pretensions to the crown, but was soon obliged to let them fall, and threw himself upon Solomon's mercy, who dismissed him upon his good behaviour, and had he been easy, he might have been safe. But here we have him betraying himself into the hand of Solomon's justice, and falling by it; the righteous God leaving him to himself, that he might be punished for his former treason, and that Solomon's throne might be established. Many thus ruin themselves because they know not when they are well, nor well done to; and sinners, by presuming on God's patience, treasure up wrath to themselves. Now observe,

1. Adonijah's treasonable project, which was to marry Abishag, David's concubine; not because he was in love with her, but because by her he hoped to renew his claim to the crown, which might stand him in stead, or because it was then looked upon as a branch of the government, to have the wives of the predecessor, 1 Sam. xii. 8. Absalom thought his pretensions much supported by laying with his father's concubines. Adonijah flatters himself, that if he may succeed him in his bed, especially with the best of his wives, he may by that means step up to succeed him in his throne. Restless and turbulent spirits have great reaches. It was but a small game to play at, as it should seem, yet he hopes to make it an after-game for the kingdom, and now gain that by a wife, which he could not gain by force.

1. The means he used to compass this. He durst not make suit to Abishag immediately, he knew she was at Solomon's dispose, and he would justly resent it if his consent were not first obtained, as even Ish-bosheth did in a like case, 2 Sam. iii. 7. nor durst he apply himself immediately to Solomon, knowing that he lay under his displeasure, but he engaged Bathsheba to be his friend in this matter, who would be forward to believe it as a matter of love, and not apt to suspect it a matter of policy. Bathsheba was surprised to see Adonijah in her apartment, and asked him if he did not come with a design to do her mischief, because she had been instrumental to crush his late attempt. No, saith he, I come peaceably *ver. 13.* and to beg a favour, *ver. 14.* that she would use the great interest she had in her son, to gain his consent that he might marry Abishag, *ver. 16, 17.* and if he may but obtain this, he will thankfully accept it. 1. As a compensation for the loss of the kingdom. He insinuates, *ver. 15.* Thou knowest the kingdom was mine, as my father's eldest son, living at the time of his death; and all Israel set their faces on me. That was false, they were but a few that he had on his side: yet thus he would represent himself as an object of compassion, that had been deprived of a crown, and therefore might be well gratified in a wife: if he may not inherit his father's throne, yet let him have something valuable that was his father's to keep for his sake, and let it be Abishag. 1. As for his reward for his acquiescence in that loss. He owns Solomon's right to the kingdom, it was his from the Lord, and I was a fool for offering to contest it, and now it is turned about to him I am satisfied. Thus he pretends to be well pleased with Solomon's accession to the throne, when he is doing all he can to give him disturbance. His words were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart.

3. Bathsheba's address to Solomon on his behalf. She promised to speak to the king for him, *ver. 18.* and did so, *ver. 19.* Solomon received her with all the respect that was owing to a mother, though himself was a king; he rose up to meet her, bowed himself unto her, and caused her to sit on his right hand, according to the law of the fifth commandment. Children not only when grown up, but when grown great, must give honour to their parents, and carry themselves dutifully and respectfully towards them. *Despise not thy mother when she is old.*—As a farther instance of the deference she paid to his mother's wisdom and authority, when he understood she had a petition to present to him, he promised not to say her nay. A promise which both he and she understood with this necessary limitation, provided it be just and reasonable, and fit to be granted; but if it were otherwise, he doubted not but to convince her that it was so, and that then she would withdraw it.

She tells him her errand at last, *ver. 21.* Let Abihag be given to Adonijah thy brother. It was strange she did not suspect the treason, but more strange she did not abhor the incest that was in the proposal: but either she did not take Abihag to be David's wife, because the marriage was not consummated, or she thought it might be dispensed with to gratify Adonijah in consideration of his tame submission to Solomon. This was her weakness and folly; it was well she was not regent. Note, they that have the ear of princes and great men, as it is their wisdom not to be too prodigal of their interest, so it is their duty never to use it for the assistance of sin, or the furtherance of any wicked design. Let not princes be asked that which they ought not to grant. It ill becomes a good man to make an ill motion, or appear in a bad cause.

4. Solomon's just and judicious rejection of the request. Though his mother herself was the advocate, and called it a small petition, and perhaps, it was the first she troubled him with since he was king, yet he denied it, without violation of the general promise he had made, *ver. 20.* If Herod had not had a mind to cut off John Baptist's head, he would not have thought himself obliged to do it by a general promise, like this, made to Herodias. The best friend we have in the world must not have such an interest in us as to bring us to do an ill thing, either unjust or unwise. 1. Solomon convinceth his mother of the unreasonableness of the request, and shews her the tendency of it, which before she was not aware of. His repartee is somewhat sharp, *Ask for him the kingdom also, ver. 22.* To ask that he may succeed the king in his bed, is, in effect, to ask that he may succeed him in his throne, for that is it he aims at. Probably he had information, or cause for a strong suspicion, that Adonijah was plotting with Joab and Abiathar to give him disturbance, which warranted him to put this construction upon Adonijah's request. 2. He convicts and condemns Adonijah for his pretensions, and both with an oath. He convicts him out of his own mouth, *ver. 23.* His own tongue shall fall upon him, and a heavier load a man need not fall under: Bath-sheba may be imposed upon, Solomon cannot; he plainly sees what he aims at, and concludes he has spoken this word against his own life; he is snared in the words of his own lips; now he shews what he would be at. He condemns him to die immediately; *He shall be put to death this day, ver. 24.* God had interposed himself with an oath, that he would establish David's throne, *Psal. lxxxix. 35.* and therefore Solomon pledged the same assurances to secure that establishment, by cutting off the enemies of it. As God liveth that establisheth the government, Adonijah should die that would unsettle it. Thus the ruin of the enemies of Christ's kingdom is as sure as the stability of his kingdom, and both as sure as the being and life of God, the founder of it. The warrant is immediately signed for his execution, and no less a man than Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, general of the army is ordered to be executioner, *ver. 25.* It is strange Adonijah may not be heard to speak for himself; but Solomon's wisdom did not see it needful to examine the matter any farther: it was plain enough Adonijah aimed at the crown, and Solomon cannot be safe while he lives. Ambitious turbulent spirits commonly prepare for themselves the instruments of death. Many a head has been lost by catching at a crown.

26. ¶ And unto Abiathar the priest said the king, Get thee to Anathoth, unto thine own fields, for thou art worthy of death: but I will not at this time put thee to death: because thou bearest the ark of the LORD God before David my father, and because thou hast been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted. 27. So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the LORD, that he might fulfil the word of the LORD, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh. 28. ¶ Then tidings came to Joab, (for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom.) And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. 29. And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and behold he is by the altar: then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go fall upon him. 30. And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the LORD, and said unto him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay, but I will die here. And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus saith Joab, and thus he answered me. 31. And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayst take away the innocent blood which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father. 32. And the LORD shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing thereof, to wit, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah. 33. Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed for ever: but upon David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the LORD. 34. So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him; and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness.

Abiathar and Joab were both aiding and abetting in Adonijah's rebellious attempt, and it is probable were at the bottom of this new motion made by Adonijah for Abihag, and it should seem, Solomon knew it, *ver. 22.* This was in both an intolerable affront both to God and to the government; and the worse, because of their high station, and the great influence their examples might have upon many. They therefore come next to be reckoned with; they are both equally guilty of the treason, but in the judgment passed upon them, a difference is made, and with good reason.

1. Abiathar, in consideration of his old services, is only degraded, *ver. 26.* 2. (1.) Solomon convicts him, and by his great wisdom finds him guilty. *Thou art worthy of death, for joining with Adonijah, when thou*

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knewest on whose head God intended to set the crown. (2.) He calls to mind the respects he had formerly shewed to David his father, and that he had both ministered to him in holy things, *had borne before him the ark of the Lord*, and also had tenderly sympathized with him in his afflictions, and been afflicted in them all, particularly when he was in exile and distress, both by Saul's persecutions and Absalom's rebellion. Note, Those that shew kindness to God's people, shall have it remembered to their advantage one time or other. (3.) For this reason he spares Abiathar's life, but deposes him from his offices, and confines him to his country seat at Anathoth, forbids him the court, the city, the tabernacle, the altar, and all intermeddling in public business, with an intimation likewise, that he was upon his good behaviour; and that though he did not put him to death at this time, he might another time, if he did not carry himself well. But for the present he was only thrust out from being priest, as rendered unworthy that station, by the opposition he had given to that which he knew to be the will of God. Saul, for a supposed crime, had barbarously slain Abiathar's father, and eighty-five priests, their families and city; Solomon spares Abiathar himself, though guilty of a real crime: thus was Saul's government ruined, and Solomon's established. As men are to God's ministers, they will find him to them. (4.) The depriving of Abiathar was the fulfilling of the threatening against the house of Eli, *1 Sam. ii. 30.* for he was the last high priest of that family. It was now above eighty years since the ruin was threatened, but God's judgments, though not executed speedily, will be executed surely.

2. Joab in consideration of his old sins, is put to death.

(1.) His guilty conscience sent him to the horns of the altar. He heard that Adonijah was executed, and Abiathar deposed, and therefore fearing his turn would be next, he flies for refuge to the altar. Many that in the day of their security are not for the service of the altar, in the day of their distress will be glad of the protection of it. Some think Joab designed thereby to devote himself for the future to a constant attendance upon the altar, hoping thereby to obtain his pardon: as some that have lived a dissolute life all their days, have thought to atone for it, by retiring into a monastery when they are old, leaving the world when it has left them, and no thanks to them.

(2.) Solomon orders him to be put to death there for the murder of Abner and Amasa, for these are the crimes upon which he thought fit to ground the sentence, rather than upon his treasonable adherence to Adonijah. Joab was indeed worthy of death for turning after Adonijah, in contempt of Solomon, and his designation to the throne, though he had not turned after Absalom, *ver. 28.* Former fidelity will not serve to excuse for any after treachery; yet, besides that Joab had merited well of the house of David, to which, and to his country, he had done a great deal of service in his day, in consideration of which, it is probable Solomon, would have pardoned him his offence against him, (for clemency gives reputation and establishment to an infant government) and would have only displaced him, as he did Abiathar, but he must die for the murders he had formerly been guilty of, which his father had charged him to call him to an account for. The debt he owed to the innocent blood that was shed, by answering its cries with the blood of him that shed it, he could not pay himself, but left it to his son to pay it, who having power wherewithal, failed not to do it. On this he grounds the sentence, aggravating the crime, *ver. 32.* that he fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, that had done him no wrong, nor meant him any, and, had they lived, might probably have done David better service; if the blood shed be not only innocent, but excellent, the life more valuable than common lives, the crime is the more heinous: that David knew not of it, and yet the case was such, that he would be suspected as privy to it; so that Joab endangered his prince's reputation in taking away the life of his rivals, which was a further aggravation.

For these crimes, 1. He must die, and die by the sword of public justice: *By man must his blood be shed*, and it lies upon his own head, *ver. 32.* as theirs doth whom he had murdered, *ver. 33.* Woe to the head that lies under the guilt of blood: vengeance for murder was long in coming upon Joab, but when it did come it remained the longer, being here entailed upon the head of his seed for ever, *ver. 33.* who instead of deriving honour, as otherwise they might have done, from his heroic actions, derived guilt and shame, and a curse, from his villainous actions, and sared the worse, for it in this world. The seed of such evil doers shall never be renowned. 2. He must die at the altar rather than escape. Joab resolved not to stir from the altar, *ver. 30.* hoping thereby either to secure himself, or else to render Solomon odious to the people, as a profaner of the holy place, if he should put him to death there. Benaiah made a scruple of either killing him there, or dragging him thence, but Solomon knew the law, that the altar of God should give no protection to wilful murderers, *Exod. xxi. 14.* *Thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die, may die a sacrifice.* In case of such sins, as the blood of beasts would atone for, the altar was a refuge, but not in Joab's case; he therefore orders him to be executed there, if he would not be got thence, to shew that he feared not the censure of the people in doing his duty, but would rectify their mistake, and let them know that the administration of justice is better than sacrifice, and that the holiness of any place should never countenance the wickedness of any person. They who by a lively faith take hold on Christ and his righteousness, with a resolution if they perish to perish there, shall find in him a more powerful protection than Joab found at the horns of the altar. Benaiah slew him, *ver. 34.* with the solemnity, no doubt, of a public execution: the law being thus satisfied, he was buried in his own house in the wilderness, privately, like a criminal, not pompously, like a soldier; yet no indignity is done to his dead body; it is not for a man to lay the iniquity upon the bones, whatever God doth.

Lastly, Solomon pleaseth himself with this act of justice, not as it gratified any personal revenge, but as it was the fulfilling of his father's orders and a real kindness to himself and his own government. 1. Guilt was hereby removed, *ver. 31.* by the turning of the innocent blood that had been shed upon the head of him that shed it, it was taken away from him, and from the house of his father; which implies the blood which is not required from the murderer, will be required from the magistrate, at least there is danger lest it should. They that would have their houses safe and built up, must put away iniquity far from them. 2. Peace was hereby secured, *ver. 33.* upon David, he doth not mean his person, but as he explains himself in the next words, upon his seed, his house and his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the Lord; thus he expresseth his desire that it may be so, and his hope that it shall be so. Now justice is done and the cry of blood is satisfied, the government will prosper. Thus righteousness and peace kiss each other. Now such a turbulent man as Joab is removed, there shall be peace. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness, *Prov. xxv. 5.* Solomon in this blessing of peace upon his house and throne, piously looks upward to God as the author of it, and forward to eternity as the perfection of it, it shall be peace from the Lord, and peace for ever from the Lord. The Lord of peace himself give us that peace which is everlasting.

Psalms xxiii. 4. Prophets, and even kings, must go this way to brighter light and honour than prophecy or sovereignty. David is going this way, and therefore gives Solomon directions what to do.

(1.) He chargeth him in general to keep God's commandments, and to make conscience of his duty, *ver. 2, 3, 4.* He prescribes to him, 1. A good rule to act by, the divine will; govern thyself by that. David's charge to him is, to keep the charge of the Lord his God. The authority of a dying father is much, but nothing to that of a living God. There are great trusts which we are charged with by the Lord our God, let us keep them carefully, as those that must give an account; and excellent statutes, which we must be ruled by, let us also keep them. The written word is our rule; Solomon must himself *as was written in the law of Moses.* 2. A good spirit to act with. *Be strong and shew thyself a man, though in years but a child.* Those that would keep the charge of the Lord their God must put on resolution. 3. Good reason for all this. This would effectually conduce, (1.) To the prosperity of his kingdom; it is the way to prosper in all thou dost, and to succeed with honour and satisfaction in every undertaking. (2.) To the perpetuity of it. *That the Lord may continue, and so confirm, his word which he spake concerning me.* Those that rightly value the treasure of the promise, that sacred depositum, cannot but be solicitous to preserve the entail of it, and very desirous that those who come after them may do nothing to cut it off. Let each in their own age successively keep God's charge; and then God will be sure to continue his word. We never let fall the promise, till we let fall the precept. God had promised David that the Messiah should come from his loins, and that promise was absolute; but the promise, that there should not fail him a man on the throne of Israel, was conditional; if his seed behave themselves as they should. If Solomon, in his day, fulfil the condition, he doth his part towards the perpetuating of the promise. The condition is, that he walk before God in all his institutions, in sincerity, with zeal and resolution; and in order hereunto, that he take heed to his way. In order to our constancy in religion, nothing more necessary than caution and circumspection.

(2.) He gives him directions concerning some particular persons, what to do with them, that he might make up his deficiencies in justice to some and kindness to others.

1. Concerning Joab, *ver. 5.* David was now conscious to himself that he had not done well to spare him, when he had made himself once and again obnoxious to the law, by the murder of Abner first, and afterwards of Amasa, both of them great men, captains of the hosts of Israel; he slew them treacherously, shed the blood of war in peace; and injuriously to David; thou knowest what he did to me therein. The murder of a subject is a wrong to the prince, it is a loss to him, and is against the peace of our sovereign lord the king. These murders were particularly against David, reflecting upon his reputation, he being at that time in treaty with them, and hazarded his interest, which they were very capable of serving. Magistrates are the avengers of the blood of those they have the charge of. It aggravated Joab's crime, that he was neither ashamed of the sin nor afraid of the punishment, but daringly wore the girdle and shoes that were stained with innocent blood, in defiance of the justice both of God and the king. David refers him to Solomon's wisdom, *ver. 6.* with an intimation that he left him to his justice. Say not, he has an hoary head, it is pity it should be cut off, for it will shortly fall of itself; no, let it not go down to the grave in peace. Though he has been long reprieved, he shall be reckoned with at last, time doth not wear out the guilt of any sin, particularly not of murder.

2. Concerning Barzillai's family, whom he orders him to be kind to for Barzillai's sake, who, we may suppose, by this time was dead, *ver. 7.* When David upon his death-bed was remembering the injuries that had been done, he could not forget the kindnesses that had been shewn, but leaves it as a charge upon his son to return them. Note, The kindnesses we have received from our friends must not be buried, either in their graves or ours, but our children must return them to theirs. Hence, perhaps, Solomon fetched that rule, *Prov. xvii. 10. Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not.* Paul prays for the house of Onesiphorus, who had often refreshed him.

3. Concerning Shimei, *ver. 8, 9.* 1. His crime is remembered; *He envied with a grievous envy, and the more grievous, because he insulted him when he was in misery, and poured vinegar into his wounds.* The Jews say, that one thing which made this a grievous curse, was that beside all that is mentioned, 2 Sam. xvi. Shimei upbraided him with his desert from Ruth the Moabitess. 2. His pardon is not forgotten. David owed he had sworn to him that he would not himself put him to death, because he seasonably submitted, and cried *peccavi*; and he was not willing, especially at this juncture, to use the sword of public justice for the avenging of wrongs done to himself. But, 3. His case as it now stands, is left with Solomon, as one that knew what was fit to be done, and would do as he found occasion. David intimates to him, that his pardon was not designed to be perpetual, but only a reprieve for David's life; *hold him not guiltless*: Do not think him any true friend to thee or thy government, nor fit to be trusted; he has no less malice than he had then, though he has more wit to conceal it. He is still a debtor to the public justice for what he did then; and though I promised him that I would not put him to death, I never promised that my successor should not. His turbulent spirit will soon give thee an occasion, which thou shouldest not fail to take, for the bringing of his hoary head to the grave with blood. This proceeded not from personal revenge, but the prudent zeal for the honour of the government, and the convenient God had made with his family, the contempt of which ought not to go unpunished. Even a hoary head, if a guilty and forfeited head, ought not to be any man's protection from justice. *The sinner, being a hundred years old, shall be accursed.* *IIa. lxx. 20.*

2. David's death and burial, *ver. 10.* He was buried in the city of David, not in the burying place of his father, as Saul was, but in his own city, which he was the founder of. There were set the thrones, and there the tombs of the house of David. Now, David, after he had served his own generation, by the will of God, fell asleep, and was laid to his fathers, and shew corruption. Acts xiii. 36. and see Acts ii. 39. His epitaph may be taken from 2 Sam. xliii. 1. *Here lies David the son of Jesse, the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the Lord of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel;* adding his own words, *Psalms xvi. 9. My flesh also shall rest in hope.* Josephus saith, that besides the usual magnificence with which his son Solomon buried him, he put into his sepulchre a vast deal of money; and that 1200 years after (so he reckons) it was opened by Hircanus the high priest, in the time of Antiochus, and 3000 talents taken out for the public service. The years of his reign are here computed, *ver. 11.* to be forty years; the odd six months, which he reigned above seven years in Hebron, are not reckoned, but the even sum only.

12. ¶ Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was established greatly.

13. ¶ And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, and she said, Comest

thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably. 14. He said moreover, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And she said, Say on. 15. And he said, Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me: that I should reign: howbeit, the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's: for it was his from the LORD. 16. And now I ask one petition of thee, deny me not. And she said unto him, Say on. 17. And he said, Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king (for he will not say thee nay) that he give me Abishag the Shunammite to wife. 18. And Bathsheba said, Well, I will speak for thee unto the king. 19. ¶ Bathsheba therefore went unto king Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah: and the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand. 20. Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee, I pray thee say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother, for I will not say thee nay. 21. And she said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife. 22. And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also; (for he is mine elder brother) even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah. 23. Then king Solomon sware by the LORD, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life. 24. Now therefore, as the LORD liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me an house as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day. 25. And king Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he fell upon him that he died.

Here is, 1. Solomon's accession to the throne, *ver. 12.* He came to it much more easily and peaceably than David did, and much sooner saw his government established. It is happy for a kingdom when the end of one good reign is the beginning of another, as it was here.

2. His just and necessary removal of Adonijah his rival, in order to the establishment of his throne. Adonijah had made some bold pretensions to the crown, but was soon obliged to let them fall, and threw himself upon Solomon's mercy, who dismissed him upon his good behaviour, and had he been easy, he might have been safe. But here we have him betraying himself into the hand of Solomon's justice, and falling by it; the righteous God leaving him to himself, that he might be punished for his former treason, and that Solomon's throne might be established. Many thus ruin themselves because they know not when they are well, nor well done to; and sinners, by presuming on God's patience, treasure up wrath to themselves. Now observe,

1. Adonijah's unreasonable project, which was to marry Abishag, David's concubine; not because he was in love with her, but because by her he hoped to renew his claim to the crown, which might stand him in stead, or because it was then looked upon as a branch of the government, to have the wives of the predecessor, 1 Sam. xii. 8. Absalom thought his pretensions much supported by laying with his father's concubines. Adonijah flatters himself, that if he may succeed him in his bed, especially with the best of his wives, he may by that means step up to succeed him in his throne. Restless and turbulent spirits have great reaches. It was but a small game to play at, as it should seem, yet he hopes to make it an after-game for the kingdom, and now gain that by a wife, which he could not gain by force.

1. The means he used to compass this. He durst not make suit to Abishag immediately, he knew she was at Solomon's dispose, and he would justly resent it if his consent were not first obtained, as even Bathsheba did in a like case, 2 Sam. iii. 7. nor durst he apply himself immediately to Solomon, knowing that he lay under his displeasure, but he engaged Bathsheba to be his friend in this matter, who would be forward to believe it as a matter of love, and not apt to suspect it a matter of policy. Bathsheba was surprised to see Adonijah in her apartment, and asked him if he did not come with a design to do her mischief, because she had been instrumental to crush his late attempt. No, saith he, I come peaceably *ver. 13.* and to beg a favour, *ver. 14.* that she would use the great interest she had in her son, to gain his consent that he might marry Abishag, *ver. 16, 17.* and if he may but obtain this, he will thankfully accept it. 1. As a compensation for the loss of the kingdom. He insinuates, *ver. 15.* Thou knowest the kingdom was mine, as my father's eldest son, living at the time of his death, and all Israel set their faces on me. That was false, they were but a few that he had on his side: yet thus he would represent himself as an object of compassion, that had been deprived of a crown, and therefore might be well gratified in a wife; if he may not inherit his father's throne, yet let him have something valuable that was his father's to keep for his sake, and let it be Abishag. 1. As for his reward for his acquiescence in that loss. He owns Solomon's right to the kingdom, it was his from the Lord, and I was a fool for offering to contest it, and now it is turned about to him I am satisfied. Thus he pretends to be well pleased with Solomon's accession to the throne, when he is doing all he can to give him disturbance. His words were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart.

3. Bathsheba's address to Solomon on his behalf. She promised to speak to the king for him, *ver. 18.* and did so, *ver. 19.* Solomon received her with all the respect that was owing to a mother, though himself was a king; he rose up to meet her, bowed himself unto her, and caused her to sit on his right hand, according to the law of the fifth commandment. Children not only when grown up, but when grown great, must give honour to their parents, and carry themselves dutifully and respectfully towards them. *Despite not thy mother when she is old.*—As a farther instance of the deference she paid to his mother's wisdom and authority, when he understood she had a petition to present to him, he promised not to say her nay. A promise which both he and she understood with this necessary limitation, provided it be just and reasonable, and fit to be granted; but if it were otherwise, he doubted not but to convince her that it was so, and that then she would withdraw it.

She tells him her errand at last, ver. 21. *Let sleeping be given to Adonijah thy brother.* It was strange she did not suspect the treason, but more strange she did not abhor the incest that was in the proposal: but either she did not take Abiathar to be David's wife, because the marriage was not consummated, or she thought it might be dispensed with to gratify Adonijah in consideration of his tame submission to Solomon. This was her weakness and folly; it was well she was not regent. Note, they that have the ear of princes and great men, as it is their wisdom not to be too partial of their interest, so it is their duty never to use it for the assistance of sin, or the furtherance of any wicked design. Let not princes be asked that which they ought not to grant. It ill becomes a good man to make an ill motion, or appear in a bad cause.

4. Solomon's just and judicious rejection of the request. Though his mother herself was the advocate, and called it a small petition, and perhaps, it was the first she troubled him with since he was king, yet he denied it, without violation of the general promise he had made, ver. 20. If Herod had not had a mind to cut off John Baptist's head, he would not have thought himself obliged to do it by a general promise, like this, made to Herodias. The best friend we have in the world must not have such an interest in us as to bring us to do an ill thing, either unjust or unwise. 1. Solomon convinceth his mother of the unreasonableness of the request, and shews her the tendency of it, which before she was not aware of. His repartee is somewhat sharp, *Ask for him the kingdom also*, ver. 22. To ask that he may succeed the king in his bed, is, in effect, to ask that he may succeed him in his throne, for that is it he aims at. Probably he had information, or cause for a strong suspicion, that Adonijah was plotting with Joab and Abiathar to give him disturbance, which warranted him to put this construction upon Adonijah's request. 2. He convicts and condemns Adonijah for his pretensions, and both with an oath. He convicts him out of his own mouth, ver. 23. His own tongue shall fall upon him, and a heavier load a man need not fall under: Bath-sheba may be imposed upon, Solomon cannot; he plainly sees what he aims at, and concludes he has spoken the word against his own life; he is scared in the words of his own lips; now he shews what he would be at. He condemns him to die immediately; *Thou shalt be put to death this day*, ver. 24. God had interposed himself with an oath, that he would establish David's throne, *Psalm lxxxix. 35.* and therefore Solomon pledged the same assurances to secure that establishment, by cutting off the enemies of it. As God liveth that establisheth the government, Adonijah should die that would unsettle it. Thus the ruin of the enemies of Christ's kingdom is as sure as the stability of his kingdom, and both as sure as the being and life of God, the founder of it. The warrant is immediately signed for his execution, and no less a man than Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada, general of the army is ordered to be executioner, ver. 25. It is strange Adonijah may not be heard to speak for himself: but Solomon's wisdom did not see it needful to examine the matter any farther: it was plain enough Adonijah aimed at the crown, and Solomon cannot be safe while he lives. Ambitious turbulent spirits commonly prepare for themselves the instruments of death. Many a head has been lost by catching at a crown.

26. ¶ And unto Abiathar the priest said the king. Get thee to Anathoth, unto thine own fields, for thou art worthy of death: but I will not at this time put thee to death: because thou bearest the ark of the LORD God before David my father, and because thou hast been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted. 27. So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the LORD, that he might fulfil the word of the LORD, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh. 28. ¶ Then tidings came to Joab, (for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom.) And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. 29. And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and behold he is by the altar: then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go fall upon him. 30. And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the LORD, and said unto him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay, but I will die here. And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus saith Joab, and thus he answered me. 31. And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayst take away the innocent blood which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father. 32. And the LORD shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing thereof, to wit, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah. 33. Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed for ever: but upon David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the LORD. 34. So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him; and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness.

Abiathar and Joab were both aiding and abetting in Adonijah's rebellion attempt, and it is probable were at the bottom of this new motion made by Adonijah for Abiathar, and it should seem, Solomon knew it, ver. 22. This was in both an intolerable affront both to God and to the government: and the worse, because of their high station, and the great influence their examples might have upon many. They therefore come next to be reckoned with; they are both equally guilty of the treason, but in the judgment passed upon them, a difference is made, and with good reason.

1. Abiathar, in consideration of his old services, is only degraded, ver. 26, 27. (1.) Solomon convicts him, and by his great wisdom finds him guilty. *Thou art worthy of death*, for joining with Adonijah, when thou

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knewest on whose head God intended to set the crown. (2.) He calls to mind the respects he had formerly shewed to David his father, and that he had both ministered to him in holy things, *had borne before him the ark of the Lord*, and also had tenderly sympathized with him in his afflictions, and been afflicted in them all, particularly when he was in exile and distress, both by Saul's persecutions and Absalom's rebellion. Note, Those that shew kindness to God's people, shall have it remembered to their advantage one time or other. (3.) For this reason he spares Abiathar's life, but deposes him from his offices, and confines him to his country seat at Anathoth, forbids him the court, the city, the tabernacle, the altar, and all intermeddling in public business, with an intimation likewise, that he was upon his good behaviour; and that though he did not put him to death at this time, he might another time, if he did not carry himself well. But for the present he was only thrust out from being priest, as rendered unworthy that station, by the opposition he had given to that which he knew to be the will of God. Saul, for a supposed crime, had barbarously slain Abiathar's father, and eighty-five priests, their families and city; Solomon spares Abiathar himself, though guilty of a real crime: thus was Saul's government ruined, and Solomon's established. As men are to God's ministers, they will find him to them. (4.) The depriving of Abiathar was the fulfilling of the threatening against the house of Eli, 1 Sam. ii. 30. for he was the last high priest of that family. It was now above eighty years since the ruin was threatened, but God's judgments, though not executed speedily, will be executed surely.

2. Joab in consideration of his old sins, is put to death.

(1.) His guilty conscience sent him to the horns of the altar. He heard that Adonijah was executed, and Abiathar deposed, and therefore fearing his turn would be next, he flies for refuge to the altar. Many that in the day of their security are not for the service of the altar, in the day of their distress will be glad of the protection of it. Some think Joab designed thereby to devote himself for the future to a constant attendance upon the altar, hoping thereby to obtain his pardon: as some that have lived a dissolute life all their days, have thought to atone for it, by retiring into a monastery when they are old, leaving the world when it has left them, and no thanks to them.

(2.) Solomon orders him to be put to death there for the murder of Abner and Amasa, for these are the crimes upon which he thought fit to ground the sentence, rather than upon his treasonable adherence to Adonijah. Joab was indeed worthy of death for turning after Adonijah, in contempt of Solomon, and his designation to the throne, though he had not turned after Absalom, ver. 23. Former fidelity will not serve to excuse for any after treachery; yet, besides that Joab had merited well of the house of David, to which, and to his country, he had done a great deal of service in his day, in consideration of which, it is probable Solomon, would have pardoned him his offence against him, (for clemency gives reputation and establishment to an infant government) and would have only displaced him, as he did Abiathar, but he must die for the murders he had formerly been guilty of, which his father had charged him to call him to an account for. The debt he owed to the innocent blood that was shed, by answering its cries with the blood of him that shed it, he could not pay himself, but left it to his son to pay it, who having power wherewithal, failed not to do it. On this he grounds the sentence, aggravating the crime, ver. 32. that he fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, that had done him no wrong, nor meant him any, and, had they lived, might probably have done David better service; if the blood shed be not only innocent, but excellent, the life more valuable than common lives, the crime is the more heinous: that David knew not of it, and yet the case was such, that he would be suspected as privy to it; so that Joab endangered his prince's reputation in taking away the life of his rivals, which was a further aggravation.

For these crimes, 1. He must die, and die by the sword of public justice: *By man must his blood be shed*, and it lies upon his own head, ver. 32. as theirs doth whom he had murdered, ver. 33. Woe to the head that lies under the guilt of blood: vengeance for murder was long in coming upon Joab, but when it did come it remained the longer, being here entailed upon the head of his seed for ever, ver. 33. who instead of deriving honour, as otherwise they might have done, from his heroic actions, derived guilt and shame, and a curse, from his villainous actions, and tarred the worse, for it in this world. The seed of such evil doers shall never be renowned. 2. He must die at the altar rather than escape. Joab resolved not to stir from the altar, ver. 30. hoping thereby either to secure himself, or else to render Solomon odious to the people, as a profaner of the holy place, if he should put him to death there. Benaiah saw a scruple of either killing him there, or dragging him thence, but Solomon knew the law, that the altar of God should give no protection to wilful murderers, *Exod. xxi. 14. Thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die*, may die a sacrifice. In case of such sins, as the blood of beasts would atone for, the altar was a refuge, but not in Joab's case; he therefore orders him to be executed there, if he would not be get thence, to shew that he feared not the censure of the people in doing his duty, but would rectify their mistake, and let them know that the administration of justice is better than sacrifice, and that the holiness of any place should never countenance the wickedness of any person. They who by a lively faith take hold on Christ and his righteousness, with a resolution if they perish to perish there, shall find in him a more powerful protection than Joab found at the horns of the altar. Benaiah slew him, ver. 34. with the solemnity, no doubt, of a public execution: the law being thus satisfied, he was buried in his own house in the wilderness, privately, like a criminal, not pompously, like a soldier; yet no indignity is done to his dead body; it is not for a man to lay the iniquity upon the bones, whatever God doth.

Lastly, Solomon pleaseth himself with this act of justice, not as it gratified any personal revenge, but as it was the fulfilling of his father's orders and a real kindness to himself and his own government. 1. Guilt was hereby removed, ver. 31. by the turning of the innocent blood that had been shed upon the head of him that shed it, it was taken away from him, and from the house of his father, which implies the blood which is not required from the murderer, will be required from the magistrate, at least there is danger lest it should. They that would have their houses safe and built up, must put away iniquity far from them. 2. Peace was hereby secured, ver. 33. upon David, we doth not mean his person, but as he explains himself in the next words, upon his seed, his house and his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the Lord; thus he expresseth his desire that it may be so, and his hope that it shall be so. Now justice is done and the cry of blood is satisfied, the government will prosper. Thus righteousness and peace kiss each other. Now such a turbulent man as Joab is removed, there shall be peace. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness, *Prov. xxv. 5.* Solomon in this blessing of peace upon his house and mine, piously looks upward to God as the author of it, and forward to eternity as the perfection of it, it shall be peace from the Lord, and peace for ever from the Lord. The Lord of peace himself give us that peace which is everlasting.

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35. ¶ And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his room over the host; and Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of Abiathar. 36. ¶ And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee an house in Jerusalem and dwell there, and go not forth thence any whither. 37. For it shall be *that* on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain, that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head. 38. And Shimei said unto the king, The saying is good; as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do. And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days. 39. And it came to pass at the end of three years, that two of the servants of Shimeirun away unto Achish son of Maachah king of Gath: and they told Shimei, saying, Behold, thy servants be in Gath. 40. And Shimei arose and saddled his ass, and went to Gath to Achish to seek his servants: and Shimei went and brought his servants from Gath. 41. And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and was come again. 42. And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Did I not make thee to swear by the LORD, and protested unto thee, saying, Know for a certain, *that* on the day thou goest out, and walkest abroad any whither, that thou shalt surely die? and thou saidst unto me, The word *that* I have heard is good. 43. Why then hast thou not kept the path of the LORD, and the commandment that I have charged thee with? 44. The king said moreover unto Shimei, Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father: therefore the LORD shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head; 45. And king Solomon *shall be* blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD for ever. 46. So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, which went out and fell upon him, that he died: and the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

Here is, 1. The preferment of Benaiah and Zadok, two faithful friends to Solomon and his government, *ver. 35.* Joab being put to death, Benaiah was advanced to be general of the forces in his room, and Abiathar being deposed, Zadok was made high-priest in his room, and therein was fulfilled that word of God, when he threatened to cut off the house of Eli, *1 Sam. ii. 35. I will raise me up a faithful priest, and will build him a sure house.* Though sacred offices may be disgraced, they shall not be destroyed by the mal-administration of those that are intrusted with them, nor shall God's works ever stand still for want of hands to carry it on; he that was a king so immediately of God's making, no marvel he was empowered to make whom he thought fit high priest, and he did it in equity, for the ancient right was in Zadok, he being of the family of Eleazar, whereas Eli and his house were of Ithamar.

2. The course that was taken with Shimei. He it sent for up by a messenger from his house at Bahurim, expeding, perhaps, no better than Adonijah's doom, being conscious of his enmity to the house of David; but Solomon knows how to make a difference of crimes and criminals: David had promised Shimei his life for his time, Solomon is not bound by that promise, and yet will not go directly contrary to it.

1. He confined him to Jerusalem, and forbade him upon any pretence whatsoever, to go out of the city, any further than the brook Kidron. *ver. 36, 37.* he would not suffer him to continue at his country seat, lest he should make mischief among his neighbours, but took him to Jerusalem, where he kept him prisoner at large; this might make Shimei's confinement easy to himself, for Jerusalem was beautiful for situation, *the joy of the whole earth*, the royal city, the holy city; he had no reason to complain of being shut up in such a paradise; it would also make it the more safe for Solomon, for there he would have him under his eye, and be able to watch his motions, and he plainly tells him, if he ever go out of the rules, he shall certainly die for it; this was a fair trial of his obedience, and such a test of his loyalty, as he had no reason to complain of: he has his life upon easy terms, he shall live if he will but be content to live at Jerusalem.

2. Shimei submits to the confinement, and thankfully takes his life upon those terms; he enters into recognizance, *ver. 38.* under the penalty of death, not to stir out of Jerusalem, and owns the saying is good: Even they that perish cannot but own the conditions of pardon and life unexceptionable, so that their blood, like Shimei's, must rest upon their own heads. Shimei promised, with an oath, to keep within his bounds, *ver. 42.*

3. Shimei forfeits his recognizance, which was the thing Solomon expected, and God was righteous in his suffering him to do it, that he might now suffer for his old sins. Two of his servants (it seems, though he was a prisoner, he lived like himself well attended) out-run him to the land of the Philistines, *ver. 39.* thither he pursued them, and thence brought them back to Jerusalem, *ver. 40.* For the keeping of it private he *juddled his ass* himself, probably went in the night, and came home, he thought undiscovered. "Seeking his servants, (saith Bishop Hall) he lost himself; these earthly things either are, or should be our servants; how commonly do we see men run out of the bounds, set by God's laws, to hunt after them till their souls incur a fearful judgment?"

4. Solomon takes the forfeiture. Information is given him that Shimei had transgressed, *ver. 41.* The king sends for him, and, 1. Chargeth him with the present crime, *ver. 42, 43.* that he had put a great contempt upon the authority and wrath both of God and the king, that he had broken the oath of the Lord, and disobeyed the commandment of his prince, and by this it appeared what manner of spirit he was of, that he would not be held by the bonds of gratitude or conscience; had he represented to Solomon the urgency of the occasion, and begged leave to go, perhaps Solomon might have given him leave, but to presume either upon his ignorance or his connivance, was to affront him in the highest degree. 2. He condemns him for his former crime, cursing David, and throwing stones at him in the day

of his affliction: *The wickedness which thy heart is privy to,* *ver. 44.* There was no need to examine witnesses for the proof of the fact, his own conscience was instead of a thousand witnesses; that wickedness which men's own hearts alone are privy to is enough, if duly considered, to fill them with confusion, in expectation of its return upon *their own heads*; for if the heart be privy to it, God is greater than the heart. Others knew of Shimei's cursing David, but Shimei himself knew of the wicked principles of hatred and malice against David, which he went upon in cursing him, and that his submission was but feigned and forced. 3. He blessed himself and his own government, *ver. 45.* King Solomon *shall be blessed*, notwithstanding Shimei's impotent curses, which perhaps in fury and despair he was now free of. *Let them curse, but bless thou.* And the throne of David *shall be established*, by taking away those that would undermine it. It is comfort, in reference to the enmity of the church's enemies, that how much soever they rage, it is a vain thing they imagine, Christ's throne is established, and they cannot shake it. 4. He gives orders for the execution of Shimei immediately, *ver. 46.* All judgment is committed to the Lord Jesus, and though he be king of peace, he will be found a king of righteousness, and this will shortly be his word of command concerning all his enemies, that will not have him to reign over them, *Bring them forth, and slay them before me*; the tongues of them that blasphemed him will fall on their heads and cut their throats.

C H A P. III.

Solomon's reign looked bloody in the foregoing chapter, but the necessary acts of justice must not be called cruelty; in this chapter it appears with another face; we must not think the worse of God's mercy to his subjects for his judgments on rebels. We have here, (1.) Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter, *ver. 1.* (2.) A general view of his religion, *ver. 2—4.* (3.) A particular account of his prayer to God for wisdom, and the answer to that prayer, *ver. 5—15.* A particular instance of his wisdom in deciding the controversy between the two harlots, *ver. 16—28.* And very great he looks here, both at the altar and on the bench, and therefore on the bench, because at the altar.

1. AND Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall of Jerusalem round about. 2. Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the LORD, until those days. 3. And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. 4. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt-offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar.

We are here told concerning Solomon.

1. Something that was unquestionably good, for which he is to be praised, and in which he is to be imitated. 1. He loved the Lord, *ver. 3.* Particular notice was taken of God's love to him, *2 Sam. xii. 24.* he had there his name from it, *Jedediah, beloved of the Lord*; and here we find he returned that love, as John, the beloved disciple, was most full of love. Solomon, a wise man, a rich man, a great man, yet the brightest encomium of him, is that which is the character of all the saints, even the poorest, he loved the Lord, loved the worship of the Lord, so the Chaldee; all that love God, love his worship, love to hear from him, and speak to him, and so as to have communion with him. 2. He walked in the statutes of David his father, *i. e.* in the statutes that David gave him, *chap. ii. 2, 3.* 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, 10. his dying father's charge was sacred, and as a law to him; or in God's statutes, which David his father walked in before him, he kept close to God's ordinances, carefully observed them, and diligently attended them; they that truly love God, will make conscience of walking in his statutes. 3. He was very free and generous in what he did for the honour of God; when he offered sacrifice he offered like a king, in some proportion to his great wealth, a thousand burnt offerings, *ver. 4.* where God sows plentifully he expects to reap accordingly, and those that truly love God and his worship, will not grudge at the expences of their religion. We may be tempted to say, *To what purpose is this waste?* Might not these cattle have been given to the poor? But we must never think that wasted which is laid out in the service of God. It seems strange, how so many beasts should be burnt upon one altar in one feast, though it continued seven days, but the fire upon the altar is supposed to be more quick and devouring than common fire, for it represented that fierce and mighty wrath of God, which fell upon the sacrifices, that the offerers might escape; *Our God is a consuming fire.* Bishop Patrick quotes it as a tradition of the Jews, that the smoke of the sacrifices ascended directly in a straight pillar, and was not scattered, otherwise it would have choked those that attended, when so many sacrifices were offered as were here.

3. Here is something concerning which it may be doubted, whether it were good or no.

(1.) His marrying Pharaoh's daughter, *ver. 1.* We will suppose she was profelyted, else it had not been lawful, yet if so, sure it was not advisable; he that loved the Lord, should, for his sake, have pitched his love upon one of the Lord's people: unequal matches of the sons of God with the daughters of men, have often been of pernicious consequences, yet some think he did this with the advice of his friends, that he was a sincere convert, for the gods of the Egyptians are not reckoned among the strange gods, which his strange wives drew him into the worship of, *chap. xi. 5, 6.* and that the book of the Canticles, and the xivth Psalm were penned on this occasion, by which these nuptials were made typical of the mystical espousal of the church to Christ, especially the gentile church.

(2.) His worshipping in the high places, and thereby tempting the people to do so too, *ver. 2, 3.* Abraham built his altars on mountains, *Gen. xii. 8—xxii. 2.* and worshipped in a grove, *Gen. xvi. 33.* thence the custom was derived, and was well enough till the divine law obliged them to one place, *Deut. xii. 5, 6.* David stuck to the ark, and did not care for the high places, but Solomon, though in other things, he shewed thereby a great zeal for sacrificing, but to obey had been better; this was an irregularity though there was as yet no house built, there was a tent pitched to the name

name of the Lord, and the ark ought to have been the centre of their unity; it was to be by the divine institution, from the high-places separated, yet while they worshipped God only, and in other things according to the rule, he graciously overlooked their weakness and accepted their services; and it is owned, that *Solomon loved the Lord, though he burnt incense in the high-places*, and let not men be more severe than God is.

5. ¶ In Gibeon the LORD appeared unto Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. 6. And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee, and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. 7. And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father; and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. 8. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. 9. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart, to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? 10. And the speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life, neither hast asked riches for thyself; nor hast asked the life of thine enemies, but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment: 12. Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart, so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. 13. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. 14. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days. 15. And Solomon awoke, and behold it was a dream: and he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up burnt-offerings, and offered peace-offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

We have here an account of a gracious visit which God made to Solomon, and the communion he had with God in it, which puts a greater honour upon Solomon than all the wealth and power of his kingdom did.

1. The circumstances of this visit, *ver. 5.* (1.) The place, it was in Gibeon, that was the great high place, and should have been the only one, because there the tabernacle and the brazen altar were, *2 Chron. i. 3.* there Solomon offered his great sacrifice, and there God owned him more than in any other of the high places; the nearer we come to the rule in our worship, the more reason we have to expect the tokens of God's presence; where God records his name, there he will meet us and bless us. (2.) The time, it was by night, the night after he had offered this generous sacrifice, *ver. 4.* the more we abound in God's work, the more comfort we may expect in him, if the day has been busy for him, the night will be easy in him. Silence and retirement befriend our communion with God; his kindest visits are often in the night, *Psal. xvii. 3.* (3.) The manner, it was in a dream, when he was asleep, his senses locked up, that God's access to his mind might be the more free and immediate; in this way God used to speak to the prophets, *Numb. xii. 6.* and to private persons for their own benefit, *Job xxxiii. 15, 16.* These divine dreams, no doubt, distinguished themselves from those, in which there are divers vanities, *Eccles. v. 7.*

2. The gracious offer God made him of the favour he should choose whatever it were, *ver. 5.* He saw the glory of God shine about him, and heard a voice saying, *Ask what I shall give thee.* Not that God was indebted to him for his sacrifices, but thus he would testify to him what great mercy he had in store for him, if he were not wanting to himself. Thus he would try his inclinations, and thus put an honour upon the prayer of faith. God, in like manner, condescends to us, and puts us in the ready way to be happy, by assuring us, that we shall have what we will for the asking, *John xvi. 23. 1 John v. 15.* What would we more? *Ask and it shall be given you.*

3. The pious request Solomon hereupon made to God. He readily laid hold on this offer; why do we neglect the like offer made to us, like Ahaz, who said, *I will not ask? Isa. vii. 12.* Solomon prayed in his sleep, God's grace assisting him; yet it was a lively prayer. What we are most in care about, and which makes the greatest impression upon us when we are awake, commonly fills and affects us when we are asleep; and by our dreams sometimes we may know what our hearts are upon, and which way our pulse beats. Plutarch makes virtuous dreams one evidence of increase in virtue. Yet this must be attributed to a higher source. Solomon's making such an intelligent choice as this, when he was asleep, and the powers of reason were least active, shewed, that it came purely from the grace of God, which wrought in him these gracious desires. If his reins thus instructed him in the night season, he must bless the Lord, who gave him counsel, *Psal. xvi. 7.* Now in this prayer,

(1.) He acknowledges God's great goodness to his father David, *ver. 6.* He speaks honourably of his father's piety, that he had walked before God in uprightness of heart, drawing a veil over his faults. It is to be hoped, those will imitate their godly parents that praise them. But more honourably of God's goodness to his father, the mercy he had shewed to him while he lived, in giving him to be sincerely religious, and then recompensing his sincerity; and the great kindness he had kept for him, to be bestowed on his family when he was gone, in giving him a son to sit on his throne. Children should give God thanks for his mercies to their parents; for the sure mercies of David. God's favours are then doubly sweet, when we observe them transmitted to us. The way to get the entail perpetuated, is to bless God that it has hitherto been preserved.

(2.) He owns his own insufficiency for the discharge of that great trust

to which he was called, *ver. 7, 8.* And here is a double plea to enforce his petition for wisdom. (1.) That his place required it. As he was successor to David; *Thou hast made me king instead of David*, who was a very wise, good man, Lord give me wisdom, that I may keep up what he wrought, and carry on what he began: And as he was ruler over Israel, Lord give me wisdom to rule well, for they are a numerous people, that will not be managed without a great deal of care: And they are thy people, which thou hast chosen, and therefore to be ruled for thee; and the more wisely they are ruled, the more glory thou wilt have from them. (2.) That he wanted it; as one that had an humble sense of his own deficiency, he pleads, *Lord, I am but a little child*; so he calls himself, a child in understanding, though his father called him a wise man, *chap. ii. 9. I know not how to go out, or come in*, as I should, for to do so much as the common daily business of the government, much less what to do in a critical juncture. Note, Those who are employed in public stations ought to be very sensible of the weight and importance of their work, and their own insufficiency for it; and then they are qualified for divine conduct and instruction. St. Paul's question, *Who is sufficient for these things?* is much like Solomon's here, *Who is able to judge this thy so great a people?* *ver. 9.* Absalom, that was a fool, wished himself a judge; Solomon, that was a wise man, trembles at the undertaken, and suspects his own fitness for it. The more knowing and considerate men are, the better acquainted they are with their own weakness, and the more jealous of themselves.

(3.) He begs of God to give him wisdom, *ver. 2. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart.* He calls himself God's servant, as pleased with that relation to God, *Psal. cxvi. 16.* and pleading it with him; I am devoted to thee, and employed for thee, give me that which is requisite to the services in which I am employed. This his good father prayed, and thus he pleads, *Psal. cxix. 125. I am thy servant, give me understanding.* An understanding heart is God's gift, *Prov. ii. 6.* We must pray for it, *James i. 5.* and pray for it with application to our particular vocation, and the various occasions we have for it; as Solomon, *Give me an understanding*, not to please my own curiosity with, or puzzle my neighbours, but to judge thy people. That is the best knowledge, which will be serviceable to us in doing our duty; and so that knowledge is, which enables us to discern between good and bad, right and wrong, sin and duty, truth and falsehood, so as not to be imposed upon by false colours, in judging either of other's actions, or of our own.

(4.) The favourable answer God gave to his request. It was a pleasing prayer, *ver. 10. The speech pleased the Lord.* God is well pleased with his own work in his people; the desires of his own kindling, the prayers of his Spirit's inditing. By this choice Solomon made it appear, that he desired to be good more than great, and to serve God's honour more than to advance his own. Those are accepted of God who prefer spiritual blessings before temporal, and are more solicitous to be found in the way of their duty than in the way to preferment.—But that was not all, it was a prevailing prayer, and prevailed for more than he asked. 1. God gave him wisdom, *ver. 12.* He fitted him for all that great work to which he had called him; gave him such a right understanding of the law which he was to judge by, and the cases he was to judge of, that never was his like for a clear head, a solid judgment, and a piercing eye: Such an insight, and such a foresight, never was a prince so blessed with.

2. He gives him riches and honour over and above into the bargain, *ver. 13.* and in these it is promised he should as much exceed his predecessors, his successors, and all his neighbours, as in wisdom. These also are God's gift, and are promised to all that seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, as far as is good for them, *Mat. vi. 23.* Let young people learn to prefer grace before gold in all their choices, because godliness has the promise of life that now is, but the life that now is has not the promise of godliness. How completely blessed was Solomon that had both wisdom and wealth! He that has wealth and power without wisdom and grace, is in danger of doing hurt with it; he that has wisdom and grace without wealth and power, is not capable of doing so much good with it as he that hath both. Wisdom is good, is so much the better with an inheritance, *Eccles. vii. 11.* But if we make sure of wisdom and grace, those will either bring outward prosperity with them, or sweeten the want of it.—God promised Solomon riches and honour absolutely, but long life upon condition, *ver. 14. If thou wilt walk in my ways, as David did, then I will lengthen thy days*: he failed in the condition; and therefore, though he had riches and honour, he did not live so long to enjoy them, as in a course of nature he might have done. Length of days is wisdom's right hand blessing, typical thereof eternal life; but it is in her left hand that riches and honour are, *Prov. ii. 16.*

Let us see here, (1.) That the way to obtain spiritual blessings is to be importunate for them; to wrestle with God in prayer for them, as Solomon did for wisdom, asking that only, as the one thing needful. (2.) That the way to temporal blessings is to be indifferent to them, and to refer ourselves to God concerning them. Solomon has wisdom given him, because he did ask it: and wealth, because he did not.

(5.) The grateful return Solomon made for the visit God was pleased to make him, *ver. 15.* He awoke, we may suppose, in a transport of joy; awoke, and his sleep was sweet to him, as the prophet speaks, *Jer. xxxi. 16.* being satisfied of God's favour, he was satisfied with it and he began to think what he should render to the Lord. He had made his prayer at the high place at Gibeon, and there God had graciously met him; but he comes to Jerusalem to give thanks before the ark of the covenant, as it were blaming himself that he had not prayed there, the ark being the token of God's presence, and wondering that God had met him any where else.—God's passing by our mistakes should persuade us to amend them.

There he, (1.) Offered a great sacrifice to God. We must give God praise for his gifts in the promise, though not yet fully performed. David used to praise God's word, as well as his works, *Psal. lvi. 10.* and particularly, *2 Sam. vii. 18.* and Solomon trod in his steps. (2.) He made a great feast, upon the sacrifice, that those about him might rejoice with him in the grace of God.

16. ¶ Then came there two women that were harlots, unto the king, and stood before him. 17. And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house, and I was delivered of a child, with her in the house. 18. And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered, that this woman was delivered also: and we were together; there was no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house. 19. And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it. 20. And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. 21. And when

when I arose in the morning to give my child suck, behold it was dead: but when I considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son which I did bear. 22. And the other woman said, Nay; but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son: and this said, No; but the dead is thy son, and the living is my son. Thus they spake before the king. 23. Then said the king, The one faith, This is my son that liveth, and thy son is the dead: and the other faith, Nay: but thy son is the dead, and my son is the living. 24. And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. 25. And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other. 26. Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king (for her bowels yerned upon her son) and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: but the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it. 27. Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it; she is the mother thereof. 28. And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged, and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to do judgment.

An instance is here given of Solomon's wisdom, to shew that the grant lately made him had a real effect upon him: And the proof is fetched, not from the mysteries of state, and the politics of the council-board, though there no doubt he excelled, but from the trial and determination of a cause between party and party, which princes, though they devolve them upon their judges, must not think it below them to take cognizance of. Observe,

1. The case opened, not by lawyers, but by the parties themselves, though they were women, which made it the easier to such a piercing eye as Solomon had, to discern between right and wrong by their own shewing. These two women were harlots, kept a public house, and their children, some think, were born of fornication, because here is no mention of their husbands.—It is probable the cause had been heard in the inferior courts before it was brought before Solomon, and had been found special, the judges being unable to determine it, that Solomon's wisdom in deciding it at last might be the more taken notice of. These two women lived in a house together, were each of them delivered of a son within three days of one another, ver. 17, 18. They were so poor, that they had no servant or nurse-tender to be with them; so slighted, because harlots, that they had no friend or relation to accompany them. One of them overlaid her child, and in the night exchanged it with the other, ver. 19, 20. who was soon aware of the cheat put upon her, and appealed to public justice to be righted, ver. 21.—See, (1.) How bad it is at all times with little children, how uncertain their lives are, and to how many dangers they are continually exposed. The age of infancy is the valley of the shadow of death, and the lamp of life when first lighted is easily blown out. It is a wonder of mercy that so few perish in the perils of nursing. (2.) How much better was it in those times with children born in fornication, than commonly it is now! Harlots then loved their children, nursed them, and were loth to part with them: whereas now, they are often abandoned, exposed, sent far enough, or killed: But thus it is foretold, that in the last days perilous times should come, when people should be without natural affection, Tim. iii. 3.

2. The difficulty of the case.—The question was, Who was the mother of the living child, which was brought into court, to be finally adjudged either to the one or to the other? Both mothers are vehement in their claims, and shew a great deal of concern about it: Both were peremptory in their asseverations, It is mine, faith one; Nay, it is mine, faith the other. Neither will own the dead child, though it would be cheaper to bury that, than to maintain the other; but it is the living one they strive for. The living child is therefore the parents joy, because it is their hopes; and may not the dead children be so? See Jer. xxxi. 17. Now the difficulty of the case was, that there was no evidence on either side. The neighbours, though it is probable some of them were present at the birth and circumcision of the children, yet had not taken so much notice of them, as to be able to distinguish them. To put the parties to the rack would have been barbarous; not that which had justice on her side, but that which was most hardy, would have had the judgment in her favour. Little weight is to be laid on extorted evidence. Judges and juries have need of wisdom to find out truth, when it thus lies hid.

3. The determination of it. Solomon having patiently heard what both sides had to say, sums up the evidence, ver. 23. And now the whole court is in expectation what course Solomon's wisdom will take to find out the truth. One knows not what to say to it; another perhaps would determine it by lot. Solomon calls for a sword, and gives orders to divide the living child between the two contenders. Now, (1.) This seemed a ridiculous decision of the case, and in the most brutish manner a cutting the knot which he could not untie. Is this the wisdom of Solomon, think the old sages of the law; little dreaming what he aimed at in it. The hearts of kings, such kings, are unsearchable, Prov. xxv. 3. There was a law concerning the dividing of a living ox, and a dead one, and Exod. xxi. 35. but that did not reach this case. But, (2.) It proved an effectual discovery of the truth. Some think Solomon did himself discern it before he made this experiment, by the countenance of the women, and their way of speaking: But by this he gave satisfaction to all the company, and silenced the pretender.—To find out the true mother he could not try which the child loved best, and must therefore which loved the child best; both pretended to a motherly affection, but the sincerity of it will be tried when the child is in danger. (1.) She that knew the child was not her own, but in contending for it stood upon a point of honour, was very well content to have it divided. She that had overlaid her own child cared not what became of this, so that the true mother might not have it.—Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it.—By this it appeared she knew her own title not good, and feared Solomon would find it so, though she little suspected she was betraying herself, but thought Solomon in good earnest. If she had been the true mother she had forfeited her interest in the child by agreeing to readily to this bloody decision. But, (2.) She that knew the child was her own, rather than the child should be butchered gives it up to her adversary. How passionately doth she cry out, O my lord! give her the living child, ver. 26. Let me see it her's rather than not see it all. By this tenderness towards the child it appeared she was not the careless mother that had overlaid the dead child, but was the true mother of the living one, that could not endure

to see its death, having compassion on the son of her womb. The case is plain (saith Solomon) what need we any witnesses? Give her the living child; for you all see by this undissembled compassion, she is the mother of it. Let parents shew their love to their children by taking care of them, especially by taking care of their souls, and with a holy violence, snatching them as brands out of the burning. They are most likely to have the comfort of children that do their duty to them.—Satan pretends to the heart of man, but by this it appears he is only a pretender, that he would be content to divide with God, whereas the rightful Sovereign of the heart will have all or none.

Lastly, We are told what a great reputation Solomon got among his people by this and other instances of his wisdom, which would have a great influence upon the ease of his government; they feared the king, ver. 28. highly revered him, durst not in any thing oppose him, and were afraid of doing an unjust thing: for they knew, if ever it came before him, he would certainly discover it, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, i. e. that the wisdom which God had promised to endue him with.—This made his face to shine, Ecclef. viii. 1. this strengthened him, Ecclef. vii. 19. this was better to him than weapons of war, Ecclef. ix. 18. for this he was both feared and loved.

C H A P. IV.

An instance of the wisdom of God granted to Solomon we had in the close of the foregoing chapter: In this we have an account of his wealth and prosperity, which was the other branch of the promise thee made him. We have here, (1.) The magnificence of his court; his ministers of state, ver. 1—6. and the purveyors of his household, ver. 7—19. and their offices, ver. 27, 28. (2.) The provision for his table, ver. 22, 23. (3.) The extent of his dominion, ver. 21, 24. (4.) The numbers, ease, and peace of his subjects, ver. 20—25. (5.) His stables, ver. 26. (6.) His great reputation for wisdom and learning, ver. 29—34. Thus great was Solomon, but our Lord Jesus was greater than he, Mat. xii. 42. though he took upon him the form of a servant: For divinity in its lowest humiliation, infinitely transcends royalty in highest elevations..

1. SO king Solomon was king over all Israel. 2. And these were the princes which he had, Azariah the son of Zadok, the priest: 3. Elihoreph and Ahiah, the sons of Shisha, scribes: Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder. 4. And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the host: and Zadok and Abiathar were the priests. 5. And Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers: and Zabud the son of Nathan was principal officer, and the king's friend. 6. And Ahishar was over the household: and Adoniram the son of Abda was over the tribute. 7. ¶ And Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, which provided victuals for the king and his household: each man his month in a year made provision. 8. And these are their names: The son of Hur, in mount Ephraim. 9. The son of Dekar, in Makaz, and in Saalbm, and Beth-she mesh, and Elon-beth-hanan. 10. The son of Hefed, in Aruboth: to him pertained Sochoh, and all the land of He-pher. 11. The son of Abinadab, in all the region of Dor, which had Taphath the daughter of Solomon to wife. 12. Baanan the son of Ahilud, to him pertained Taanach and Megiddo, and all Beth-shean, which is by Zartanah beneath Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah, even unto the place that is beyond Jokneam. 13. The son of Geber, in Ramoth-gilead: to him pertained the towns of Jair the son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead: to him also pertained the region of Argob, which is in Bashan, threescore great cities with walls, and brasen bars. 14. Ahinadab the son of Iddo had Mahanaim. 15. Ahimaaz was in Naphtali; he also took Basmath the daughter of Solomon to wife. 16. Baanah the son of Huihai was in Asher and in Aloth. 17. Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar. 18. Shimei the son of Elah, in Benjamin. 19. Geber the son of Uri was in the country of Gilead, in the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and of Og king of Bashan; and he was the only officer which was in the land.

Here is, 1. Solomon upon his throne, ver. 1. So king Solomon was king, i. e. he was confirmed and established king over all Israel, and not as his successors, only over two tribes. He was a king, i. e. he did the work and duty of a king, with the wisdom God had given him. Those preserve the name and honour of their place that mind the business of it, and make conscience of that.

2. The great officers of his court; in the choice of which, no doubt, his wisdom much appeared.—It is observable, (1.) That several of them are the same that were in his father's time. Zadok and Abiathar were then priests, 2 Sam. xx. 25. so they were now; only then Abiathar had the precedence, now Zadok; Jehoshaphat was then recorder, or keeper of the great seal, so he was now. Benaiah, in his father's time, was a principal man in military affairs, and so he was now. Shisha was his father's scribe, and his son's were his, ver. 3. Solomon, though a wise man, would not affect to seem wiser than his father in this matter. When sons come to inherit their fathers' wealth, honour, and power, it is a piece of respect to their memory, *ceteris paribus*, to employ those whom they employed, and trust to those whom they trusted. Many pride themselves in being the reverse to their good parents. (2.) The rest were clergymen's sons. His prime minister of state was Azariah the son of Zadok the priest. Two others of the same rank were the sons of Nathan the prophet, ver. 5. In preferring them he testified the grateful respect he had for their good father, whom he loved in the name of a prophet.

3. The

3. The purveyors for his household, whose business it was to send in provisions from several parts of the country, for the king's tables and cellars, *ver.* 7. and for his stables, *ver.* 27, 28. That thus, (1.) His house might always be well furnished at the best hand. Let great men learn hence good house-keeping, and yet good husbandry in their house-keeping; to be generous in spending according to their ability, but prudent in providing. It is the character of a virtuous woman, that she *bringeth her food from afar*, *Prov.* xxxi. 14. not far fetched and dear bought, but the contrary, every thing bought where it is cheapest. (2.) That thus he himself, and those who immediately attended, might be eased of a great deal of care, and the more closely apply themselves to the business of the state, not troubled about much serving, provision for that being got ready to their hand. (3.) That thus all the parts of the kingdom might be equally benefited by the taking off of the commodities that were the products of their country, and the circulating of the coin. Industry would hereby be encouraged, and consequently wealth increased, even in those tribes that lay most remote from the court. The providence of God extends itself to all *places of his dominions*, *Psal.* ciii. 22. So should the prudence and care of princes. (4.) The dividing of this trust into so many hands was politic enough, that no one man might be continually burthened with the care of it, nor grow exorbitantly rich with the profit of it; but that Solomon might have those in every district, that, having a dependence upon the court, would be serviceable to him and his interests, as there was occasion.

These commissioners of the victualling office, not for the army or navy, (Solomon was engaged in no war) but for the household, are here named. Several of them only by their surnames, as great men commonly call their servants, Ben-hur, Ben-deker, &c. though several of them have also their proper names prefixed. Two of them married Solomon's daughters, Ben Aminadab, *ver.* 11. and Ahimaaz, *ver.* 15. and no disparagement to them to marry men of business. Better match with the officers of their father's court that were Israelites, than with the sons of the princes that were *strangers to the covenant of promise*. The son of Geber was in Ramoth-gilead, *ver.* 19. and Geber himself was in the county of Sihon and Og, which included that and Mahanaim, *ver.* 14. He is therefore said to be the only officer in that land, because the other two mentioned, *ver.* 13, 14. depended on him, and were subordinate to him.

20. ¶ Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry. 21. And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms, from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life. 22. ¶ And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescor measures of meal, 23. Ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, beside harts, and roebucks, and fallow deer, and fatted fowl. 24. For he had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphzah even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him. 25. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon. 26. ¶ And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen. 27. And those officers provided victual for king Solomon, and for all that came unto king Solomon's table, every man in his month: they lacked nothing. 28. Barley also and straw for the horses and dromedaries brought they unto the place where the officers were, every man according to his charge.

Such a kingdom, and such a court, sure never any prince had, as Solomon's is here described to be.

1. Such a kingdom. Never did the crown of Israel shine so bright as it did when Solomon wore it; never in his father's days, never in the days of any of his successors, nor was that kingdom ever so glorious a type of the kingdom of the Messiah, as it was then. The account here given of it is such as fully answers the prophecies which we have concerning it, *Psal.* lxxii. which is a psalm for Solomon, but with reference to Christ. (1.) The territories of his kingdom were large, and its tributaries many, so it was foretold, that he should have dominion from sea to sea, *Psal.* lxxii. 8—11. Solomon reigned not only over all Israel, who were his subjects by choice; but over all the neighbour kingdoms, who were his subjects by constraint. All the princes from the river Euphrates north-east, to the border of Egypt south-west, not only added to his honour, by doing him homage, and holding their crowns from him, but added to his wealth, by serving him, and bringing him presents, *ver.* 21. David, by his successful wars, compelled them to this subjection, and Solomon, by his admirable wisdom, made it easy and reasonable, for it is fit the fool should be servant to the wise in heart. If they gave him presents, he gave them instructions, and still taught the people knowledge; not only his own people, but those of other nations; and wisdom is better than gold. He had peace on all sides, *ver.* 24. None of all the nations that were subject to him offered to shake off his yoke, or give him any disturbance, but rather thought themselves happy in their dependence upon him. Herein his kingdom typified the Messiah's; for to him it is promised, that he shall have the heathen for his inheritance, and that princes shall worship him, *Isa.* xlix. 6, 7. liii. 12.

(2.) The subjects of this kingdom, and its inhabitants, were many and merry; very many, very merry. (1.) They were numerous, and the country exceeding populous, *ver.* 20. Judah and Israel were many, and that good land sufficient to maintain them all: They were as the sand of the sea in multitude. Now was fulfilled the promise made to Abraham concerning the increase of his seed, *Gen.* xxii. 17. as well as that concerning the extent of their dominion, *Gen.* xv. 18. This was their strength and beauty, the honour of their prince, the terror of their enemies, and an advancement of the wealth of the nation. If they grew so numerous, that the place was any where too strait for them, they might remove with advantage into the countries that were subject to them. God's spiritual Israel are many, at least they will be so when they come all together, *Rev.* vii. 9. (2.) They were easy, they dwelt safely, or with confidence and assurance, *ver.* 25. not jealous of their king, or of his officers; not disaffected either to him, or one to another, nor under any apprehension of danger from enemies foreign

No. LI.

or domestic. They were happy and knew it; safe and willing to think themselves so: They dwelt every man under his vine and fig-tree. Solomon invaded no man's property, took not to himself their vineyards and olive-yards, as sometimes was the manner of the king, *1 Sam.* viii. 19. but what they had they could call their own: But he protected every man in the possession and enjoyment of what was his own. They that had vines and fig-trees, eat the fruit of them themselves; and so great was the peace of the country, that they might, if they pleased, dwell as safely under the shadow of them, as within the walls of a city. Or, because it was usual to have vines by the sides of their houses, *Psal.* cxxviii. 3. They are said to dwell under their vines. (3.) They were cheerful in the use of their plenty, eating and drinking, and making merry, *ver.* 20. Solomon did not only keep a good table himself, but enabled all his subjects, according to their rank, to do so too, and taught them, that God gave them their abundance that they might use it soberly and pleasantly, not that they might hoard it up. There is nothing better than for a man to eat the labour of his hands, *Eccles.* ii. 24. and that with a merry heart, *Eccles.* ix. 7. His father, in the Psalms, had led his people into the comforts and communion with God, and now he led them into the comfortable use of the good things of this life. This pleasant posture of Israel's affairs extended in place from Dan to Beer-sheba; no part of the country was exposed, or upon any account uneasy; and it continued a long time, all the days of Solomon, without any material interruption. Go where you would, and you might see all the marks of plenty, peace, and satisfaction: The spiritual peace and joy, and holy security, of all the faithful subjects of the Lord Jesus was typified by this.—The kingdom of God is not, as Solomon's was, meat and drink, but that which is infinitely better, righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

2. Such a court Solomon kept, as can scarce be paralleled. We may guess at the vast number of his attendants, and the great resort that was to him, by the provision that was made daily for his table: Of bread, so many measures of flour and meal, as it is computed would richly serve 3000 men; Carellus computes about 48,000 men; and the provisions of flesh, *ver.* 23. is rather more in proportion. What vast quantities were here of beef, mutton, and venison, and the choicest of all fatted things, as some read that which we translate fatted fowl? Ahasuerus once in his reign made a great feast, to shew the riches of his kingdom, *Esth.* i. 3, 4. But it was much more to the honour of Solomon, that he kept a constant table, and a very noble one; not of dainties or deceitful meats, he himself witnessed against them, *Prov.* xxiii. 3. but substantial food for the entertainment of those who came to hear his wisdom. Thus Christ fed those whom he taught, five thousand at a time, more than ever Solomon's table would entertain at once: And all believers have in him a continual feast. Herein he far outdoes Solomon, that he feeds all his subjects, not with the bread that perisheth, but with that which endures to eternal life.

It added much both to the strength and glory of Solomon's kingdom, that he had such abundance of horses, forty thousand for chariots, and twelve thousand for his troops: A thousand horse perhaps in every tribe, for the preserving of the public peace, *ver.* 26. God had commanded that their king should not multiply horses, *Deut.* xvii. 16. nor, according to the account here given, considering the extent and wealth of Solomon's kingdom, did he multiply horses in proportion to his neighbours; for we find even the Philistines bringing into the field thirty thousand chariots, *1 Sam.* xiii. 6. and the Syrians at least forty thousand horse, *2 Sam.* x. 18. The same officers that provided for his house, provided also for his stable, *ver.* 27, 28. Every one knew his place, and work, and time; and so this great court was kept without confusion. Solomon had vast incomes, lived at vast expence, and perhaps wrote that with application to himself, *Ecc.* v. 11. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them; and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes, unless withal they have the satisfaction of doing good with them?

29. ¶ And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore. 30. And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east-country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31. For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. 32. And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. 33. And he spake of trees, from the cedar-tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. 34. And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

Solomon's wisdom was more his glory than his wealth; a general account of that we have here.

1. The fountain of his wisdom. God gave it him, *ver.* 29. He owns it himself, *Prov.* ii. 6. The Lord giveth wisdom. He gives the powers of reason, *Job* xxxviii. 36. preserves and improves them: The ordinary advances of them are owing to his providence, and sanctification of them to his grace; and this extraordinary pitch to which they arrived in Solomon, to a special grant of his favour to him, in answer to prayer.

2. The fulness of it; He had wisdom and understanding exceeding much. Great knowledge of distant countries, and the histories of former times; a quickness of thought, strength of memory, and clearness of judgment, such as never any man had: It is called largeness of heart, for the heart is often put for the intellectual powers: He had a vast compass of knowledge, could take things entire, and had an admirable faculty of laying things together. Some, by his largeness of heart, understand his courage and boldness, and that great assurance with which he delivered his dictates and determinations: Or, it may be meant of his disposition to do good with it. He was very free, and communicative of his knowledge; had the gift of utterance as well as wisdom; was as free of his learning as he was of his meat; and grudged neither to any that were about him. Note, It is very desirable, that those who have large gifts of any kind, should have large hearts to use them for the good of others; and this is from the hand of God, *Eccles.* iii. 24. He shall enlarge the heart, *Psal.* cxix. 32.

The greatness of Solomon's wisdom is illustrated by comparison. Chaldea and Egypt were nations famous for learning; thence the Greeks borrowed theirs; but the greatest scholars of either of these nations came short of Solomon, *ver.* 30. If nature excels art, much more doth grace. The knowledge which God gives by special favour, goes beyond that which man gets

gets by his own labour. Some wise men there were in Solomon's time that were in great repute; particularly Heman, and others who were Levites, and employed by David in the temple-music, 1 Chron. xv. 19. Heman was his *Seer in the word of God*, 1 Chron. xxv. 5. Chalcol and Darda were own brothers, and they also were noted for learning and wisdom; but *Solomon excelled them all*, ver. 39. He posed them, quite outdid them; his counsel was much more valuable.

3. The fame of it. It was talked of *in all nations round about*. His great wealth and glory made his wisdom much more illustrious, and gave him those opportunities of shewing it, which they cannot have that live in poverty and obscurity. The jewel of wisdom may receive great advantage by the setting of it.

4. The fruits of it; by these the tree is known: he did not bury his talents, but shewed his wisdom.

1. In his compositions. Those in divinity are not mentioned here, which he wrote by divine inspiration, for they are extant, and will remain to the world's end monuments of his wisdom; and are, as other parts of scripture, of use to make us *wise unto salvation*. But, besides these, it appears by what he spake, or dictated to be written from him, (1.) That he was a moralist, and a man of great prudence, for he spake *three thousand proverbs*, wise sayings, apophthegms, of admirable use for the conduct of human life. The world is much governed by proverbs, and was never better furnished with useful ones, than by Solomon. Whether those proverbs of Solomon that we have were any part of the three thousand is uncertain. (2.) That he was a poet, and a man of great wit. *His songs were a thousand and five*, of which one only is extant, because that only was divinely inspired, which is therefore called his Song of songs. His wife's instructions were communicated by proverbs, that they might be familiar to them he designed to teach, and ready on all occasions; by songs, that they might be pleasant, and move the affections. (3.) That he was a natural philosopher, and a man of great learning and insight into the mysteries of nature: from his own and others observations and experiences he wrote both of plants and animals, ver. 33. descriptions of their natures and qualities, and (some think) of the medicinal use of them.

2. In his converse. There came persons from all parts, who were more inquisitive after knowledge than their neighbours, to *hear the wisdom of Solomon*, ver. 34. Kings, that had heard of it, sent their ambassadors to hear it, and to bring them instructions from it. Solomon's court was the staple of learning, and the rendezvous of philosophers, i. e. the lovers of wisdom, who all came to light their candle at his lamp, and to borrow from him. Let those, who magnify the modern learning above that of the ancients, produce such a treasury of knowledge any where in these latter ages, as that was which Solomon was master of; yet this puts an honour upon human learning, that Solomon was praised for it, and recommends it to the great men of the earth, as well worthy their diligent search. But, lastly, Solomon was herein a type of Christ, *in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*; and hid for use, for he is *made of God to us wisdom*.

C H A P. V.

The great work, which Solomon was raised up to do, was the building of the temple; his wealth and wisdom were given him to qualify him for that; In this especially he was to be a type of Christ, for He shall build the temple of the Lord, Zech. vi. 12. In this chapter we have an account of the preparations he made for that and his other buildings. Gold and silver his good father had prepared in abundance, but timber and stones he must get ready; and about these we have him treating with Hiram king of Tyre. (1.) Hiram congratulated his accession to the throne, ver. 1. (2.) Solomon signified to him his design to build the temple, and desired him to furnish him with workmen, ver. 2-6. (3.) Hiram agrees to do it, ver. 7-9. (4.) Solomon's work is accordingly well done, and Hiram's workmen well paid, ver. 10-18.

1. **A**ND Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon (for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father) for Hiram was ever a lover of David. 2. And Solomon sent to Hiram, saying, 3. Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the LORD his God, for the wars which were about him on every side, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet. 4. But now the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, *so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent*. 5. And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name. 6. Now therefore command thou, that they hew me cedar-trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants, according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that *there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians*. 7. ¶ And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, *Blessed be the LORD this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people*. 8. And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for: *and I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir*. 9. My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea: and I will convey them by sea in floats, unto the place that thou shalt appoint me, and will cause them to be discharged there, and thou shalt receive them: and thou shalt accomplish my desire in giving food for my household.

We have here an account of the amicable correspondence that was between Solomon and Hiram. Tyre was a famous trading city that lay close upon the sea in the border of Israel; its inhabitants (as should seem) none of the devoted nations, nor ever at enmity with Israel; and therefore David never offered to destroy them, but lived in friendship with them. It is said here of Hiram their king, that he was *ever a lover of David*; and we have reason to think he was a worshipper of the true God, and had himself renounced, though he could not reform the idolatry of his city. David's character will win the affections even of those that are without. Here is,

1. Hiram's embassy of compliment to Solomon, ver. 1. He sent, as is usual among princes, to condole the death of David, and to renew his alliances with him upon his succession to the government. It is good keeping up friendship and communion with the families in which religion is uppermost.

2. Solomon's embassy of business to Hiram, sent it is likely by messengers of his own. In wealth, honour, and power, Hiram was very much inferior to Solomon, yet Solomon has occasion to be beholden to him, and begs his favour. Let us never look with disdain on those below us, because we know not how soon we may need them. Solomon, in his letter to Hiram, acquaints him, (1.) With his design to build a temple to the honour of God. Some think that temples among the heathen took their first rise and copy from the tabernacle which Moses erected in the wilderness, and that there were none before that; however, there were many houses built in honour of the false gods, before this was built in honour of the God of Israel, so little is external splendor a mark of the true church. Solomon tells Hiram (who was himself no stranger to the affair), (1.) That David's wars were an obstruction to him, that he could not build his temple, though he designed it, ver. 3. They took up much of his time, and thoughts, and cares; were a constant expence to him, and a constant employment of his subjects: so that he could not do it so well as it must be done, and therefore it not being essential to religion, he must leave it to be done by his successor. See what need we have to pray, that God will *give peace in our time*, because in time of war the building of the gospel-temple commonly goes slowly on. (2.) That his peace was an opportunity to him to build it, and therefore he resolved to set about it presently. *God has given me rest* both at home and abroad, and there is no adversary, ver. 4. no Satan, so the word is; no instrument of Satan to oppose it, or to divert us from it. Satan doth all he can to hinder temple-work, 1 Thess. ii. 18. Zech. iii. 1. but when he is bound (Rev. xx. 2.) we should be busy. When there is no evil occurrent, then let us be vigorous and zealous in that which is good, and get it forward. When the churches have rest, let them be edified, Acts ix. 31. Days of peace and prosperity present us with a fair gale, which we must account for, if we improve not. As God's providence excited Solomon to think of building the temple, by giving him wealth and leisure; so his promise encouraged him. God had told David, that his son should build him an house, ver. 5. he will take it as a pleasure to be thus employed, and will not lose the honour designed him by that promise. It may stir us up much to good undertakings, to be assured of good success in them. Let God's promise quicken our endeavours.

(2.) With his desire that Hiram would assist him herein. Lebanon was the place whence timber must be had, a noble forest in the north of Canaan, particularly expressed in the grant of that land to Israel, *all Lebanon*, Josh. xiii. 5. So that Solomon was proprietor of all its products; the cedars of Lebanon are spoken of as in a special manner the *planting of the Lord*, Psalm civ. 16. being designed for Israel's use, and particularly for temple service. But Solomon owns, though the trees were his, the Israelites could not *skill to hew timber* like the Sidonians, who were Hiram's subjects. Canaan was a land of wheat and barley, Deut. viii. 8. which employed Israel in the affairs of husbandry, so that they were not at all versed in manufactures: in them the Sidonians excelled. Israel, in the things of God, is a *wise and understanding people*; and yet in curious arts are inferior to their neighbours: true piety is a much more valuable gift of heaven, than the highest degree of ingenuity. Better be an Israelite skilful in the law, than a Sidonian skilful to hew timber. But the case being thus, Solomon courts Hiram to send him workmen, and promiseth, ver. 6. both to assist them, *My servants shall be with thy servants*, to work under them; and to pay them, *Unto thee will I give hire for thy servants*, for the labourer, even in church-work, though it be indeed its own wages, *is worthy of his hire*. The evangelical prophet, foretelling the glory of the church in the days of the Messiah, seems to allude to this story, *Isa. lx.* where he prophesies, (1.) That the *sons of strangers* (such were the Tyrians and Sidonians) should *build up the wall of the gospel-temple*, ver. 10. Ministers were raised up among the Gentiles, for the edifying of the body of Christ. (2.) That the *glory of Lebanon* should be brought to it to *beautify it*, ver. 13. All the external endowments and advantages should be made servicable to the interests of Christ's kingdom.

3. Hiram's reception of, and return to this message.

1. He received it with great satisfaction to himself. He rejoiced greatly, ver. 6. that Solomon trod in his father's steps, and carried on his designs, and was likely to be so great a blessing to his kingdom. This Hiram's generous spirit rejoiced in, and not only in the prospect he had of making an advantage to himself by Solomon employing him. What he had the pleasure of, he gave God the praise of, *Blessed be the Lord which has given to David* (who was himself a wise man) *a wise son, to rule over this great people*. See here, 1. With what pleasure Hiram speaks of Solomon's wisdom, and the extent of his dominions, and let us learn not to envy others either those secular advantages, or those endowments of the mind wherein they excel us. What great comfort it is to those that wish well to the Israel of God, to see religion and wisdom kept in families from one generation to another, especially in great families, and those that have great influence on others: and where it is so, God must have the glory of it. If to godly parents be given a godly seed, *Mal. ii. 15.* it is a token for good, and a happy indication, that the entail of the blessing shall not be cut off.

2. He returned it with great satisfaction to Solomon, granting him what he desired, and shewing himself very forward to assist him in this great good work to which he was laying his hand. We have here his articles of agreement with Solomon concerning this affair. In which we may observe Hiram's prudence. (2.) He deliberated upon the proposal, before he returned an answer, ver. 8. *I have considered the things*. It is common for those that make bargains rashly, afterwards to wish them undone again. The virtuous woman *considers a field*, and then *buys it*, Prov. xxxi. 16. Those do not lose time, who take time to consider. (2.) He descended to particulars in the articles, that there might be no misunderstanding afterwards to occasion a quarrel. Solomon had spoken of hewing the trees, ver. 6. and Hiram agrees to what he desired concerning that, ver. 8. but nothing had been said concerning carriage; that matter therefore must be settled: Land carriage would be very troublesome and chargeable, he therefore undertakes to bring all the timber down from Lebanon by sea; a coasting voyage. Conveyance by water is a great convenience to trade, for which God is to have praise, who taught man that discretion. Observe what a punctual bargain Hiram made: Solomon must appoint the place where the timber shall be delivered,

delivered, and thither Hiram will undertake to bring it, and be responsible for its safety. As the Sidonians excelled the Israelites in timber-work, so did they in sailing, for Tyre and Sidon were *situate at the entry of the sea*, Ezek. xxvii. 3. they therefore were fittest to take care of the water-carriage, *tractant fabrilis fabri*. And, lastly, if Hiram undertake for the works and doth all Solomon's desire concerning the timber, ver. 8. he justly expects that Solomon shall undertake for the wages, *Thou shalt accomplish my desire in giving food for my household*, ver. 9. not only for the workmen, but for my own family. If Tyre supplies Israel with craftsmen, Israel will supply Tyre with corn, Ezek. xxvii. 17. Thus, by the wise disposal of providence, one country has need of another, and is benefitted by another, that there may be mutual correspondence and dependence, to the glory of God our common parent.

10. So Hiram gave Solomon cedar-trees, and fir-trees, according to all his desire. 11. And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year. 12. And the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him: and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and they two made a league together. 13. ¶ And king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men. 14. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses: a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home: and Adoniram was over the levy. 15. And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains: 16. Besides the chief of Solomon's officers which were over the work, three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that wrought in the work. 17. And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house. 18. And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stone-squarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.

Here is, 1. The performance of the agreement between Solomon and Hiram, each of the parties made good their engagement. (1.) Hiram delivered Solomon the timber according to his bargain, ver. 10. The trees were Solomon's, but perhaps the workmanship was of more value than the trees, (*materiam superabat opus*) and that was Hiram's; he is therefore said to deliver the trees. (2.) Solomon conveyed the corn to Hiram which he had promised him, ver. 11. Thus he let justice be followed, as the expression is, Deut. xvi. 20. *i. e.* justice on both sides in every bargain.

2. The confirmation of the friendship that was between them hereby. God gave Solomon wisdom, ver. 12. that was more and better than any thing Hiram did or could give him; but this made Hiram love him, and enabled Solomon to prove his kindness, so that they were both willing to ripen their mutual love into a mutual league, that it might be lasting; it is wisdom to strengthen our friendship with those we find to be honest and fair: lest new friends prove not so firm and so kind as old ones.

3. The labourers whom Solomon employed in preparing materials for the temple. (1.) Some that were Israelites that were employed in the more easy and honourable part of the work, felling trees, and helping to square them, in conjunction with Hiram's servants; for this he appointed thirty thousand, but employed only ten thousand at a time, so that for one month's work they had two month's vacation, both for the rest and for the dispatch of their own affairs at home, ver. 13, 14. It was temple-service, yet Solomon takes care they shall not be over-worked; great men ought to consider that their servants must rest as well as they. (2.) Others that were captives of other nations, who were to bear burdens, and to hew stone, ver. 15. and we read not that these had their resting times as the other had, for they were doomed to servitude. (3.) There were some employed as directors and overseers, ver. 16. three thousand three hundred that ruled over the people, and they were as necessary and useful in their place as the labourers in theirs: here were many hands and many eyes employed, for preparation was now to be made, not only for the temple, but for all the rest of Solomon's building, both at Jerusalem and here in the forest of Lebanon, and in other places of his dominion, of which see chap. ix. 17, 18, 19. He speaks of the vastness of his undertakings, Ecc. ii. 4. *I made me great works*, which required this vast number of workmen.

4. The laying of the foundation of the temple, for that is the building his heart is chiefly upon, and therefore he begins with that, ver. 17, 18. It should seem Solomon was himself present and president at the founding of the temple, and that the first stone, (as has been usual in famous buildings) was laid with some solemnity. *Solomon commanded and they brought costly stones for the foundation*; he would do every thing like himself, generously, and therefore would have some of the costliest stones laid, or buried rather, in the foundation, though, being out of sight, worse might have served. Christ, who is laid for a foundation, is an elect and precious stone, 1st. xxviii. 16. and the foundations of the church are said to be laid with sapphires, Isa. liv. 11. compare Rev. xxi. 19. That sincerity which is our gospel perfection, obligeth us to lay our foundation firm, and to bestow most pains on that part of our religion which lies out of the sight of men.

C H A P. VI.

Great and long preparation had been making for the building of the temple, and here at length comes an account of the building of it; a noble piece of work it was, one of the wonders of the world, and, taking it in its spiritual significance, one of the glories of the church. Here is, (1.) The time when it was built, ver. 1. and how long it was in building, ver. 37, 38. (2.) The silence with which it was built, ver. 7. (3.) The dimensions of it, ver. 2, 3. (4.) The message God sent to Solomon when it was in the building, ver. 11—13. (5.) The particulars; windows, ver. 4. chambers, ver. 5, 6, 8, 9, 10. the walls and flooring, ver. 14—18. the oracle, ver. 19—22. the cherubims, ver. 23—30. the doors, ver. 31—35. and the inner court, ver. 36. Many learned men have well bestowed their pains in expounding the description here given of the temple according to the rules of architecture, and solving the

difficulties which upon search they find in it; but in that matter having nothing new to offer we will not be particular or curious; it was then well understood, and every man's eyes that saw this glorious structure, furnished him with the best critical exposition of this chapter.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD. 2. And the house which king Solomon built for the LORD, the length thereof was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits. 3. And the porch before the temple of the house, twenty cubits was the length thereof, according to the breadth of the house; and ten cubits was the breadth thereof, before the house. 4. And for the house he made windows of narrow-lights. 5. ¶ And against the wall of the house he built chambers round about, against the walls of the house round about, both of the temple, and of the oracle: and he made chambers round about. 6. The nethermost chamber was five cubits broad, and the middle was six cubits broad, and the third was seven cubits broad: for without in the wall of the house he made narrowed rests round about, that the beams should not be fastened in the walls of the house. 7. And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone, made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building. 8. The door for the middle chamber was in the right side of the house: and they went up with winding stairs into the middle chamber, and out of the middle into the third. 9. So he built the house and finished it; and covered the house with beams and boards of cedar. 10. And then he built chambers against all the house, five cubits high: and they rested on the house with timber of cedar.

Here, 1. The temple is called *the house of the Lord*, ver. 1. because it was (1.) Directed and modelled by him. Infinite wisdom was the architect, and gave David the plan or pattern by the Spirit, not by word of mouth only, but for the greater certainty and exactness, in writing, 1 Chron. xxviii. 12, 19. as he had given to Moses in the mount a draft of the tabernacle. (2.) Dedicated and devoted to him and to his honour, to be employed in his service, so his, as never any other house was, for he manifested his glory in it, so as never any other, in a way agreeable to that dispensation; for when there were cardinal ordinances, there was a *worldly sanctuary*, Heb. ix. 1, 10. This gave it its *beauty of holiness*, that it was *the house of the Lord*, which far transcended all its other beauties.

2. The time when it began to be built is exactly set down. (1.) It was just 480 years after the bringing of the children of Israel out of Egypt; allowing 40 years to Moses, 17 to Joshua, 299 to Judges, 40 to Eli, 40 to Samuel and Saul, 40 to David, and 4 to Solomon, before he began the work, we have the just sum of 190—So long it was after that holy state was founded before that holy house was built, which in less than 430 years was burnt by Nebuchadnezzar; it was thus deferred, because Israel had by their sins rendered themselves unworthy of this honour, and because God would shew how little he values external pomp and splendor in his service, he was in no haste for a temple. David's tent, which was clean and convenient, though it was neither stately nor rich, nor, for ought appears, ever consecrated, is called *the house of the Lord*, 2 Sam. xii. 20. and served as well as Solomon's temple; yet when God gave Solomon great wealth he put it into his heart thus to employ it, and graciously accepted him, chiefly because it was to be a shadow of good things to come, Heb. ix. 9. (2.) It was in the fourth year of Solomon's reign, the three first years being taken up in settling the affairs of his kingdom, that he might not find any embarrassment from them in this work; it is not time lost which is spent in composing ourselves for the work of God, and disentangling ourselves from every thing which might distract or divert us; during this time he was adding to the preparations which his father had made, 1 Chron. xxii. 14. hewing the stone, squaring the timber, and getting every thing so ready, so that he is not to be blamed for slackness in deferring it so long; we are truly serving God when we are preparing for his service, and furnishing ourselves for it.

3. The materials are brought in ready for their place, ver. 7. so ready, that there was *neither hammer nor axe heard in the house while it was in building*. In all building Solomon prescribes it as a rule of prudence to *prepare the work in the field, and afterwards build*, Prov. xxiv. 27. But here it seems the preparation was more than ordinary full and exact, to that degree, that when the several parts came to be put together there was nothing defective to be added, nothing amiss to be amended; it was to be the temple of the God of peace, and therefore no iron tool must be heard in it; quietness and silence both become and befit religious exercises; God's work should be done with *as much care and as little noise* as may be; the temple was thrown down with axes and hammers, and they that did it roared in the midst of the congregation, Psalm lxxiv. 4, 6. but it was built up in silence; clamour and violence often hinder, but never further the work of God.

4. The dimensions are laid down, ver. 2, 3. according to the rules of proportion. Some observe that the length and breadth, was just double to that of the tabernacle. Now Israel was grown more numerous, the place of their meeting needed to be enlarged, Isa. liv. 1, 2. and now they were grown richer, they were the better able to enlarge it; where God sows plentifully, he expects to reap so.

5. An account of the windows, ver. 4. they were *broad within and narrow without*, Marg. such should the eyes of our mind be, reflecting nearer on ourselves than on other people, looking much within, to judge ourselves, but little without, to censure our brethren.—The narrowness of the lights intimated the darkness of that dispensation in comparison with the gospel-day.

The chambers are described, ver. 5, 6. which were as pentises to the temple, in which the utensils of the tabernacle were carefully laid up, the priests

priests dressed and undressed themselves, and left the clothes in which they ministered; probably in some of these chambers they feasted upon the holy things, they served as vestries. Solomon was not so intent upon the magnificence of the house, as to neglect the conveniences that were requisite for the offices thereof, that every thing might be done decently and in order; care was taken that the beams should not be fastened in the walls to weaken them, *ver. 6.* let not the church's strength be impaired under pretence of adding to its beauty or convenience.

11. And the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying, 12. *Concerning this house which thou art in building, if thou wilt walk in my statutes, and execute my judgments, and keep all my commandments to walk in them: then will I perform my word with thee, which I spake unto David thy father.* 13. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake my people Israel. 14. So Solomon built the house, and finished it.

Here is, 1. The word of God sent to Solomon, when he was engaged in building the temple: God let him know that he took notice of what he was doing, *the house he was now building, ver. 12.* None employ themselves for God, but his eye is upon them, *I know thy works, thy good works;* he assured him, that upon condition he would proceed and persevere in obedience to the divine law, and keep in the way of duty and the true worship of God, divine loving-kindness should be drawn out both to himself, *I will perform my word with thee;* aid to his kingdom, Israel shall be ever owned as my people, *I will dwell among them, and not forsake them;* this word God sent him (probably by a prophet;) (1.) That by the promise, he might be encouraged and comforted in his work; perhaps sometimes the great care, expence, and fatigue of it, made him ready to wish he had never begun it, but this would help him through the difficulties of it, that the promised establishment of his family and kingdom would abundantly recompense all his pains. An eye to the promise will carry us cheerfully through our work, and those who wish well to the public, will think nothing too much that they can do, to secure and perpetuate to it the tokens of God's presence. (2.) That by the condition he annexed, he might be awakened to consider, that though he built the temple never so strong, the glory of it would soon depart, unless he and his people continued to walk in God's statutes; God plainly lets him know, that all this charge he and his people were at in erecting this temple, would neither excuse them from obedience to the law of God, nor shelter them from his judgments in case of disobedience; keeping God's commandments is better, and more pleasing to him, than building churches.

2. The work Solomon did for God. *So he built the house, ver. 14.* so animated by the message God had sent him, so admonished, not to expect that God should own his building, unless he were obedient to his laws; Lord, I proceed upon these terms, being firmly resolved to walk in thy statutes; the strictness of God's government will never drive a good man from his service, but quicken him in it; Solomon built and finished, he went on with it; and God went along with him till it was completed; it is spoken both to God's praise and his; he grew not weary of the work, met not with any obstructions, as *Ezra iv. 24.* did not out-build his pocket, nor do it by the halves, but having begun to build, was both able and willing to finish, for he was a wife builder.

15. And he built the walls of the house within with boards of cedar, both the floor of the house, and the walls of the ceiling; and he covered them on the inside with wood, and covered the floor of the house with planks of fir. 16. And he built twenty cubits on the sides of the house, both the floor and the walls with boards of cedar: he even built them for it within, even for the oracle, even for the most holy place. 17. And the house, that is, the temple before it, was forty cubits long. 18. And the cedar of the house within was carved with knops, and open flowers: all was cedar, there was no stone seen. 19. And the oracle he prepared in the house within, to set there the ark of the covenant of the LORD. 20. And the oracle in the fore-part was twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in breadth, and twenty cubits in the height thereof; and he overlaid it with pure gold, and so covered the altar, which was of cedar. 21. So Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold: and he made a partition by the chains of gold before the oracle, and he overlaid it with gold. 22. And the whole house he overlaid with gold until he had finished all the house: also the whole altar that was by the oracle he overlaid with gold. 23. ¶ And within the oracle he made two cherubims of olive-tree, each ten cubits high. 24. And five cubits was the one wing of the cherub, and five cubits the other wing of the cherub: from the uttermost part of the one wing, unto the uttermost part of the other, were ten cubits. 25. And the other cherub was ten cubits: both the cherubims were of one measure, and one size. 26. The height of the one cherub was ten cubits, and so was it of the other cherub. 27. And he set the cherubims within the inner house; and they stretched forth the wings of the cherubims, so that the wing of the one, touched the one wall and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall: and their wings touched one another in the midst of the house. 28. And he overlaid the cherubims with gold. 29. And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubims, and palm-trees, and open flowers, within and without. 30. And the floor of the house he overlaid with gold

within and without. 31. And for the entering of the oracle he made doors of olive-tree: the lintel and side-posts were a fifth part of the wall. 32. The two doors also were of olive-tree: and he carved upon them carvings of cherubims, and palm-trees, and open flowers, and overlaid them with gold, and spread gold upon the cherubims and upon the palm-trees. 33. So also made he for the door of the temple, posts of olive-tree, a fourth part of the wall. 34. And the two doors were of fir-tree: the two leaves of the one door were folding, and the two leaves of the other door were folding. 35. And he carved thereon cherubims and palm-trees, and open-flowers: and covered them with gold, fitted upon the carved work. 36. ¶ And he built the inner court with three rows of hewed stone, and a row of cedar beams. 37. ¶ In the fourth year was the foundation of the house of the LORD laid, in the month Zif. 38. And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul (which is the eighth month) was the house finished throughout all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it: So was he seven years in building it.

Here is, 1. The wainscot of the temple described: it was of cedar, *ver. 15.* which was strong and durable, and of a very sweet smell: the wainscot was curiously carved with knops (like eggs or apples) and flowers, no doubt as the fashion then was, *ver. 18.*

2. The gilding, it was not like ours, washed over, but the whole house, all the inside of the temple, *ver. 22.* even the floor, *ver. 30.* he overlaid with gold, and the most holy place with pure gold, *ver. 21.* Solomon would stick at no charge to make it every way sumptuous, gold was under foot there, as it should be in all the living temples, the abundance of it lessened its worth.

3. The oracle, or speaking-place, (for so the word signifies) the Holy of Holies, so called, because from thence God spake to Moses, and perhaps to the high-priest, when he consulted with the breast-plate of judgment: in this place, the ark of the covenant was to be set, *ver. 19.* Solomon made every thing new, and more magnificent than it had been, but the ark only, and that was still the same that Moses made, and its mercy-seat and cherubims; that was the token of God's presence which is always the same with his people, whether they meet in tent or temple, and changes not with their condition.

4. The cherubims. Besides those at the ends of the mercy-seat, which covered the ark. (1.) Solomon set up two more, very large ones, images of young men, (as some think) with wings made of olive-wood, and all overlaid with gold, *ver. 23, &c.* This most holy place was much larger than that in the tabernacle, and therefore the ark would seem lost in it, and the dead wall would have been unsightly if it had not been thus adorned. (2.) He carved cherubims upon all the walls of the house, *ver. 29.* The heathen set up images of their gods, and worshipped them; these were designed to represent the servants and attendants of the God of Israel, the holy angels, not to be themselves worshipped, *see thou do it not,* but to shew how great he is whom we are to worship.

5. The doors. The folding doors that led into the oracle, were but a fifth part of the wall, *ver. 31.* those into the temple were a fourth part, *ver. 33.* but both were beautified with cherubims engraven on them, *ver. 32, 35.*

6. The inner court, in which the brazen altar was, and at which the priests ministered; this was separated from the court where the people were but by a low wall, three rows of hewed stone topped with a cornice of cedar, *ver. 36.* that over it the people might see what was done, and hear what the priest said to them, for then under that dispensation, they were not kept wholly either in the dark, or at a distance.

Lastly, The time spent in this building, it was but seven years and a half from the founding to the finishing of it, *ver. 38.* considering the vastness and fineness of the building, and the many appurtenances to it, which were necessary to fit it for use, it was soon done; Solomon was in earnest in it, had money enough and nothing to divert him from it, and many hands made quick work; he finished it (as the margin reads it) with all the appurtenances thereof, and with all the ordinances thereof, not only built the place, but set the work a doing which it was built for.

Let us now see what was typified by this temple.

1. Christ is the true temple, he himself spake of the temple of his body, *John ii. 21.* God himself prepared him his body, *Heb. x. 5.* In him dwelt the fulness of the Godhead, as the Shechinah in the temple, in him meet all God's spiritual Israel, through him we have access with confidence to God; all the angels of God, those blessed cherubims have a charge to worship him.

2. Every believer is a living temple, in whom the spirit of God dwelleth, *1 Cor. iii. 16.* even the body is so by virtue of its union with the soul, *1 Cor. iv. 19.* We are not only wonderfully made by the divine providence, but more wonderfully made anew by the divine grace; this living temple is built upon Christ as its foundation, and will be perfected in due time.

3. The gospel church is the mystical temple, it grows to a holy temple in the Lord, *Eph. ii. 21.* enriched and beautified with the gifts and graces of the spirit, as Solomon's temple with gold and precious stones; only Jews built the tabernacle, but Gentiles join with them in building the temple, even strangers and foreigners are built up an habitation of God, *Eph. ii. 19, 22.* The temple was divided into the holy place, and the most holy, the courts of it into the outer and inner, so there is the visible and the invisible church; the door into the temple was wider than that into the oracle; many enter into profession that come short of salvation. This temple is built firm upon a rock, not to be taken down, as the tabernacle of the Old Testament was. The temple was long in preparing, but was built at last, the top-stone of the gospel church will at length be brought forth with shoutings, and pity there should be the clashing of axes and hammers in the building of it; angels are ministering spirits, attending the church on all sides, and all the members of it.

4. Heaven is the everlasting temple, there the church will be fixed, and no longer moveable; the streets of the new Jerusalem, in allusion to the flooring of the temple, are said to be of pure gold, *Rev. xxi. 21.* the cherubims there always attend the throne of glory. The temple was uniform, and in heaven there is perfection of beauty and harmony. In Solomon's temple, there was no noise of axes and hammers, every thing is quiet and serene in heaven; all that shall be stones in that building, must, in the present state of probation and preparation, be fitted and made ready for it,

must be hewn and squared by the divine grace, and so made meet for a place there.

C H A P. VII.

As in the story of David, one chapter of wars and victories follows another, so in the story of Solomon, one chapter of his buildings follows another. In this chapter we have, (1.) His fitting up several buildings for himself and his own use, ver. 1—12. (2.) His furnishing the temple which he had built for God, 1. With the two pillars, ver. 13—22. 2. With a molten Sea, ver. 23—26. 3. With ten bases of brass, ver. 27—37. and ten lavers upon them, ver. 38, 39: 4. With all the other utensils of the temple, ver. 40—50. 5. With the things that his father had dedicated, ver. 51. The particular description of these things was not needless when it was written, nor is it now useless.

BUT Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house. 2. ¶ He built also the house of the forest of Lebanon; the length thereof was a hundred cubits, and the breadth thereof fifty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits, upon four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams upon the pillars. 3. And it was covered with cedar above upon the beams, that lay on forty five pillars, fifteen in a row. 4. And there were windows in three rows, and light was against light in three ranks. 5. And all the doors and posts were square, with the windows: and the light was against light in three ranks. 6. ¶ And he made a porch of pillars; the length thereof was fifty cubits, and the breadth thereof thirty cubits: and the porch was before them: and the other pillars and the thick beam were before them. 7. ¶ Then he made a porch for the throne, where he might judge, even the porch of judgment: and it was covered with cedar from one side of the floor to the other. 8. And his house where he dwelt, had another court within the porch, which was of the like work. Solomon made also an house for Pharaoh's daughter (whom he had taken to wife) like unto this porch. 9. All these were of costly stones, according to the measures of hewed stones, sawed with saws, within and without, even from the foundation unto the coping, and so on the outside toward the great court. 10. And the foundation was of costly stones, even great stones; stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits. 11. And above were costly stones (after the measures of hewed stones) and cedars. 12. And the great court round about was with three rows of hewed stones, and a row of cedar beams, both for the inner court of the house of the LORD, and for the porch of the house.

Never had any man so much of the spirit of building as Solomon had, nor built to better purpose; he began with the temple, built for God first, and then all his other buildings were comfortable; the surest foundations of a lasting prosperity are those which are laid in an early piety, *Matth. vi. 33.*

1. He built a house for himself, ver. 1. where he dwelt, ver. 8. His father had built good a house; but it was no reflection upon his father for him to build a better, in proportion to the estate wherewith God had blessed him; much of the comfort of this life, some think, lies in an agreeable house. He was thirteen years building this house, whereas he built the temple in little more than seven years, not that he was more exact, but less eager and intent in building his own house, than in building God's; he was in no haste for his own palace, but impatient till the temple was finished and fit for use; thus we ought to prefer God's honour before our own ease and satisfaction.

2. He built the house of the forest of Lebanon, ver. 2. supposed to be a country-seat near Jerusalem, so called from the pleasantness of its situation, and the trees that encompassed it. I rather incline to think, it was a house built in the forest of Lebanon itself, whither (though far distant from Jerusalem) Solomon (having so many chariots and horses, and those dispersed into chariot cities, which probably were his stages) might frequently retire with ease; it doth not appear that his throne, mentioned, ver. 7. was at the house of the forest of Lebanon, and it was not at all improper to put his shields there as his magazine. Express notice is taken of his buildings, not only in Jerusalem, but in Lebanon, chap. ix. 19. and we read of the tower of Lebanon, which looks towards Damascus, *Cant. vii. 4.* which probably was part of this house. A particular account is given of this house; that being built in Lebanon, a place famed for cedars, the pillars, and beams, and roof, were all cedar, ver. 2, 3. and it being designed for pleasant prospect, there was three tier of windows on each side, light against light, ver. 4, 5. or as it may be read, prospect against prospect. Those whose lot is cast in the country, may be well reconciled to a country life by this, that some of the greatest princes have thought those the most pleasant of their days, which they have spent in their country retirements.

3. He built piazzas before one of his houses, either that at Jerusalem, or that in Lebanon, which were very famous, a porch of pillars, ver. 6. either for an exchange or a guard-house, or for those to walk in, that attended him about business, till they could have audience, or for state and magnificence. He himself speaks of wisdom's building her house, and hewing out her seven pillars, *Prov. ix. 1.* for the shelter of those that, three verses before, chap. viii. 34. are said to watch daily at her gates, and to wait at the posts of her door.

4. At his house where he dwelt in Jerusalem, he built a great hall, or porch of judgment, where was set the throne, or king's bench, for the trial of causes, in which he himself was appealed to, (*Placita coram ipso rege tenada*) and this was richly wainscotted with cedar, from the floor to the roof, ver. 7. He had there also another court within the porch, nearer his house, of the like work, for his attendants to walk in, ver. 8.

No. LI.

5. He built a house for his wife, where she kept her court, ver. 8. It is said to be like the porch, because built of cedar like it, though not in the same form; this no doubt was not near adjoining his own palace, yet perhaps it had been as near as it ought to have been, Solomon would not have multiplied wives as he did.

The wonderful magnificence of all these buildings is taken notice of, ver. 9. &c. All the materials were the best in their kind; the foundation stones were costly for their bigness, four or five yards square, or at least so many yards long, ver. 10. and the stones of the building, costly for the workmanship, hewed and sawn, and in all respects finely wrought, ver. 9, 11. the court of his own house was like that of the temple, ver. 12. compare chap. vi. 36. so well did he like the model of God's courts, that he made his own by it.

13. ¶ And king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. 14. He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphthali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass; and he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work. 15. For he cast two pillars of brass of eighteen cubits high apiece: and a line of twelve cubits did compass either of them about. 16. And he made two chapiters of molten brass, to set upon the tops of the pillars; the height of the one chapter was five cubits, and the height of the other chapter was five cubits: 17. And nets of checker-work, and wreaths of chain-work, for the chapiters which were upon the top of the pillars; seven for the one chapter, and seven for the other chapter. 18. And he made the pillars, and two rows round about upon the one net-work, to cover the chapiters that were upon the top, with pomegranates: and so did he for the other chapter. 19. And the chapiters that were upon the top of the pillars, were of lily-work in the porch, four cubits. 20. And the chapiters upon the two pillars had pomegranates also above, over-against the belly which was by the net-work: and the pomegranates were two hundred, in rows round about upon the other chapter. 21. And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar, and called the name thereof Jachin: and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz. 22. And upon the top of the pillars was lily-work: so was the work of the pillars finished. 23. ¶ And he made a molten sea, ten cubits from the one brim to the other: it was round all about, and his height was five cubits: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about. 24. And under the brim of it round about there were knops compassing it, ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about: the knops were cast in two rows, when it was cast. 25. It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east: and the sea was set above upon them, and all their hinder parts were inward. 26. And it was an hand-breadth thick, and the brim thereof was wrought like the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies: it contained two thousand baths. 27. ¶ And he made ten bases of brass; four cubits was the length of one base, and four cubits the breadth thereof, and three cubits the height of it. 28. And the work of the bases was on this manner: They had borders, and the borders were between the ledges: 29. And on the borders that were between the ledges, were lions, oxen, and cherubims: and upon the ledges there was a base above: and beneath the lions and oxen were certain additions made of thin work. 30. And every base had four brazen wheels, and plates of brass: and the four corners thereof had underfettors: under the laver were underfettors molten, at the side of every addition. 31. And the mouth of it within the chapter, and above, was a cubit, but the mouth thereof was round, after the work of the base, a cubit and a half: and also upon the mouth of it were gravings with their borders, four-square, not round. 32. And under the borders were four wheels, and the axle-trees of the wheels were joined to the base, and the height of a wheel was a cubit and half a cubit. 33. And the work of the wheels was like the work of a chariot-wheel: their axle-trees, and their naves, and their felloes, and their spokes were all molten. 34. And there were four underfettors to the four corners of one base: and the underfettors were of the very base itself. 35. And in the top of the base was there a round compass of half a cubit high: and on the top of the base, the ledges thereof, and the borders thereof were of the same. 36. For on the plates of the ledges thereof, and on the borders thereof, he graved cherubims, lions, and palm-trees, according to the proportion of every one, and additions round about. 37. After this manner he made the ten bases: all of them

them had one casting, one measure, and one size. ¶ Then made he ten lavers of bras: one laver contained forty baths: and every laver was four cubits: and upon every one of the ten bases, one laver. 39. And he put five bases on the right side of the house, and five on the left side of the house: and he set the sea on the right side of the house eastward, over against the south. 40. ¶ And Hiram made the lavers, and the shovels, and the basins: so Hiram made an end of doing all the work that he made king Solomon for the house of the LORD. 41. The two pillars, and the two bows of the chapters that were on the top of the two pillars: and the two net-works, to cover the two bowls of the chapters which were upon the top of the pillars: 42. And four hundred pomegranates for the two net-works, even two rows of pomegranates for one net-work to cover the two bowls of the chapters that were upon the pillars: 43. And the ten bases, and ten lavers on the bases: 44. And one sea, and twelve oxen under the sea: 45. And the pots, and the shovels, and the basins: and all these vessels which Hiram made to king Solomon, for the house of the LORD, were of bright bras. 46. In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them in the clay-ground, between Succoth, and Zarthan. 47. And Solomon left all the vessels unweighed, because they were exceeding many: neither was the weight of the bras found out.

We have here an account of the bras-work about the temple; there was no iron about the tabernacle, but we find David preparing for the temple iron for things of iron, 1 Chron. xxix. 2. What those things were, we are not told, but the things of bras are here some of them described, and the rest mentioned.

1. The braiser whom Solomon employed to preside in this part of the work, was Hiram, or Huram, 2 Chron. iv. 11. who was by his mother's side an Israelite, of the tribe of Naphtali, by his father's side a man of Tyre, ver. 14. If he had the ingenuity of a Tyrian, and the good affection of an Israelite to the house of God, (the head of a Tyrian, and the heart of an Israelite) it was happy that the blood of the two nations mixed in him, thereby he was qualified for the work to which he was designed; as the tabernacle was built with the wealth of Egypt, so the temple with the wit of Tyre; God will serve himself by the common gift of the children of men.

1. The bras he made use of was the best he could get; all the brazen vessels were of bright bras, ver. 44. good bras, so the Chaldee, that which was strongest and looked finest; God, that is the best, must be served and honoured with the best.

3. The place where all the brazen vessels were cast, was in the plain of Jordan, because the ground there was stiff and clayey, fit to make moulds of, for the casting of the bras, ver. 46. and Solomon would not have that dirty smoky work done in or near Jerusalem.

4. The quantity was not accounted for, the vessels were unnumbered, (so it may be read, ver. 47. as well as unweighed) because they were exceeding many, and it would have been an endless thing to keep the count of them, neither was the weight of the bras, when it was delivered to the workmen; searched or enquired into, so honest were the workmen, and such great plenty of bras they had, that there was no danger of wanting; we must ascribe it to Solomon's care, that he provided so much, not to his carelessness, that he kept no account of it.

5. Some particulars of the bras-work are described.

1. Two brazen pillars, which were set up in the porch of the temple, ver. 21. whether under the cover of the porch, or in the open air, is not certain; it was between the temple and the court of the priests. These pillars were neither to hang gates upon, nor to rest any building upon, but purely for ornament and signification. (1.) What an ornament they were, we may gather from the account here given of the curious work that was about them; chequer-work, and chain-work, and net-work, and lily-work, and pomegranates in rows, and all of bright bras; and framed no doubt, according to the best rules of proportion, to please the eye. (2.) The signification is intimated in the names given them, ver. 21. *Jachin, He will establish*; and *Boaz, In him is strength*. Some think they were intended for memorials of the pillar of cloud and fire, which led Israel through the wilderness: I rather think them designed for memorandums to the priests, and others that came to worship at God's door. 1. To depend upon God only, and not upon any sufficiency of their own, for strength and establishment in all their religious exercises; when we come to wait upon God, and find our hearts wandering and unfixed, then by faith let us fetch in help from heaven: *Jachin, God will fix this roving mind*; *It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace*. We find ourselves weak and unable for holy duties, but this is our encouragement. *Boaz, in him is our strength, who works in us both to will and to do*. *I will go in the strength of the Lord God*. Spiritual strength and stability are to be had at the door of God's temple, where we must wait for the gifts of grace, in the use of the means of grace. 2. It was a memorandum to them, of the strength and establishment of the temple of God among men. Let them keep close to God and duty, and they should never lose the dignities and privileges, but the grant should be confirmed and perpetuated to them. The gospel church is what God will establish, what he will strengthen, and what the gates of hell can never prevail against: But for this temple, when it was destroyed, particular notice is taken of the destroying of these pillars, 2 Kings xxv. 13, 17. which had been the tokens of its establishment, and would have been so, if they had not forsaken God.

1. A brazen sea; a very large vessel, about five yards diameter, and which contained above five hundred barrels of water for the priests use in washing themselves, the sacrifices, and keeping the courts of the temple clean, ver. 23. &c. It stood raised upon the figures of twelve oxen in bras, so high, that either they must have stairs to climb up to it, or cocks at the bottom to draw water from it. The Gibeonites or Nethinim, who were to draw water for the house of God, had the care of filling it. Some think Solomon made the images of oxen to support this great cistern, in contempt of the golden calf, which Israel had worshipped, that (as Bishop Patrick expresseth it) the people might see there was nothing worthy of adoration to those figures; they were fitter to make pots of, than to make

gods of: Yet this prevailed not to prevent Jeroboam's setting up the calves for deities. In the court of the tabernacle there was only a laver of bras provided to wash in, but in the court of the temple, a sea of bras; intimating, that by the gospel of Christ much fuller preparation is made for our cleansing, than was by the law of Moses: That had a laver, this a sea; a fountain opened, Zech. xii. 1.

3. Ten bases, or stands, or settles of bras, on which were put ten lavers, to be filled with water for the service of the temple, because there would not be room at the molten sea for all that had occasion to wash there. The bases on which the lavers were fixed, are very largely described here, ver. 27, &c. They were curiously adorned, and set upon wheels, that the lavers might be removed as there was occasion; but ordinarily they stood in two rows, five on one side of the court, and five on the other, ver. 39. Each laver contained about forty baths, i. e. about ten barrels, ver. 38. They must be very clean that bear the vessels of the Lord: Spiritual priests and spiritual sacrifices must be washed in the laver of Christ's blood, and of regeneration. We must wash often, for we daily contract pollution; cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts. Plentiful provision is made for our cleansing; so that if we have our lot for ever among the unclean, it will be our own fault.

4. Besides these there were a vast number of bras pots, made to boil the flesh of the peace offerings in, which the priests and officers were to feast upon before the Lord, see 1 Sam. ii. 14. also shovels, wherewith they took out the ashes of the altar. Some think the word signifies flesh-hooks, with which they took meat out of the pot.—The basins also were made of bras, to receive the blood of the sacrifices. These are put for all the utensils of the brazen altar, Exod. xxxviii. 3. Now they were doing, they made abundance of them, that they might have a good stock of new ones by them, when those that were first in use wore out and went to decay. Thus Solomon having wherewithal, provided for posterity.

48. And Solomon made all the vessels that pertained unto the house of the LORD: the altar of gold, and the table of gold, whereupon the shew-bread was, 49. And the candlesticks of pure gold, five on the right side, and five on the left, before the oracle, with the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs of gold, 50. And the bowls and the snuffers, and the basins and the spoons, and the censers of pure gold; and the hinges of gold, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the house, to wit, of the temple. 51. So was ended all the work which king Solomon made for the house of the LORD: and Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated: even the silver, and the gold, and the vessels did he put among the treasures of the house of the LORD.

Here is, 1. The making of the gold work of the temple, which it seems, was done last, for with it the work of the house of God ended. All within doors was gold, and all made new, except the ark, with its mercy-seat and cherubims, the old ones either melted down or laid by. The golden altar, table, and candlestick, with all their appurtenances. The altar of incense was still one, for Christ and his intercession is so: but he made ten golden tables, 2 Chron. iv. 8. (though here mention is made of that one only on which the shew-bread was, ver. 48. which we may suppose larger than the rest, and to which the rest were as side-boards) and ten golden candlesticks, ver. 49. intimating the much greater plenty both of spiritual food and heavenly light, which the gospel blesteth us with, than the law of Moses did or could afford.—Even the hinges of the doors were of gold, ver. 50. that every thing might be alike magnificent, and speak Solomon's generosity. Some suggest, that every thing was made thus splendid in God's temple, to keep the people from idolatry, for none of the idol-temples were so rich and fine as this: But how little the expedient availed, the event shewed.

2. The bringing in of the dedicated things, which his father had devoted to the honour of God, ver. 51. What was not expended in the building and furniture, was laid up in the treasury for repairs, exigences, and the constant charge of the temple service. What the parents have dedicated to God, the children ought by no means to alienate or recal, but cheerfully confirm what was intended for pious and charitable uses, that they may with their estates inherit the blessing.

C H A P. VIII.

The building and furniture of the temple were very glorious, but the dedication of it exceeds in glory, as much as prayer and praise, the work of saints, exceeds the casting of metal, and the graving of stones, the work of the craftsman. The temple was designed for the keeping up of the correspondence between God and his people; and here we have an account of the solemnity of their first meeting there. 1. The representatives of all Israel were called together, ver. 1, 2. to keep a feast to the honour of God for fourteen days, ver. 65. 2. The priests brought the ark into the most holy place, and fixed it there, ver. 3—9. 3. God took possession of it by a cloud, ver. 10, 11. 4. Solomon, with thankful acknowledgments to God, informed the people touching the occasion of their meeting, ver. 12—21. 5. In a long prayer, he recommended to God's gracious acceptance all the prayers that should be made in or towards this place ver. 22—53. 6. He dismissed the assembly with a blessing and an exhortation, ver. 54—61. 7. He offered abundance of sacrifice, on which he and his people feasted, and so parted, with great satisfaction, ver. 62—66. These were Israel's golden days; days of the son of man in type.

1. **T**HEN Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon, in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD, out of the city of David, which is Zion. 2. And all the men of Israel assembled themselves

elves unto king Solomon, at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month. 3. And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. 4. And they brought up the ark of the LORD, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, even those did the priests and the Levites bring up. 5. And king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled unto him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude. 6. And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, into the oracle of the house to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims. 7. For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark, and the staves thereof above. 8. And they drew out the staves, that the end of the staves were seen out in the holy place before the oracle, and they were not seen without: and there they are unto this day. 9. There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. 10. And it came to pass when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD. 11. So that the priests could not stand to minister, because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD.

The temple, though richly beautified, yet whilst it was without the ark, was like a body without a soul, or a candlestick without a candle, or (to speak more properly) an house without an inhabitant: All the cost and pains bestowed on this stately structure is lost, if God do not accept it; and unless he please to own it, as the place where he will record his name, it is, after all, but a ruinous heap; when therefore all the work is ended, chap. vii. 51. the one thing needful is yet behind, and that is the bringing in of the ark: This therefore is the end which must crown the work, and which here we have an account of the doing of with great solemnity.

1. Solomon presides in this service, as David did in the bringing up of the ark to Jerusalem; and neither of them thought it below them to follow the ark, or to lead the people in their attendance on it. Solomon glories in the title of the preacher, *Eccl. i. 1.* and the master of assemblies, *xii. 11.* This great assembly he summons, *ver. 1.* and he is the centre of it, for to him they all assembled, *ver. 2.* at the feast in the seventh month, viz. The feast of tabernacles, which was appointed on the fifteenth day of that month, *Lev. xxiii. 34.* David, like a very good man, brings the ark to a convenient place, near him; Solomon, like a very great man, brings it to a magnificent place. As every man has received the gift, so let him minister; and let children proceed in God's service there, where their parents left off.

2. All Israel attends the service; their judges and the chief of their tribes and families; all their officers civil and military; and (as they speak in the north) the heads of their clans; A convention of these might well be called an assembly of all Israel; these came together on this occasion, (1.) To do honour to Solomon, and to return him the thanks of the nation, for all the good offices he had done in kindness to them. (2.) To do honour to the ark, to pay their respect to it, and testify their universal joy and satisfaction in its settlement. The advancement of the ark in external splendor, though it has oft proved too strong a temptation to its hypocritical followers; yet, because it may prove an advantage to its true interests, is to be rejoiced in (with trembling) by all that wish well to it. Public mercies call for public acknowledgments. They that appeared before the Lord did not appear empty, for they all sacrificed sheep and oxen innumerable, *ver. 5.* The people in Solomon's time was very rich, and very easy, and very merry, and therefore it was fit on this occasion they should consecrate not only their mirth, but a part of their wealth, to God and his honour.

3. The priests do their part of the service. In the wilderness the Levites were to carry the ark, because then there were not priests enough to do it; but here, (it being the last time the ark was to be carried) the priests themselves did it, as they were ordered to do, when it surrounded Jericho. We are here told, 1. What was in the ark, nothing but the two tables of stone, *ver. 9.* a treasure far exceeded all the dedicated things both of David and Solomon. The pot of manna, and Aaron's rod, were by the ark, but not in it. 2. What was brought up with the ark, *ver. 4.* The tabernacle of the congregation. It is likely, both that which Moses set up in the wilderness, which was in Gibeon, and that which David pitched in Zion, both of them were brought to the temple, to which they did, as it were, surrender all their holiness, merging it in that of the temple; which must from henceforward be the place where God must be sought unto. Thus will all the church's holy things on earth, that are so much its joy and glory, be swallowed up in the perfection of holiness above. 3. Where it was fixed in its place, the place appointed for its rest after all its wanderings, *ver. 6.* In the oracle of the house, whence they expected God to speak to them, even in the most holy place, which was made so by the presence of the ark, under the wings of the great cherubim, which Solomon set up, *chap. vi. 23.* signifying the special protection of angels, which God's ordinances and the assemblies of his people are taken under. The staves of the ark were drawn out, so as to be seen from under the wings of the cherubims, to direct the high-priest to the mercy-seat, over the ark, when he went in once a year to sprinkle the blood there; so that still they continued of some use, though there was no longer occasion for them to carry it by.

4. God graciously owns what is done, and testifies his acceptance of it, *ver. 10, 11.* The priests might come into the most holy place, till God manifested his glory there, but from thenceforward none might at their peril approach the ark, but the high-priest on the day of atonement: Therefore it was not till the priests were come out of the oracle, that the Shechinah took possession of it in a cloud, which filled not only the most holy place, but the temple, so that the priest which burnt incense at the golden altar, could not bear it. By this visible emanation of the divine glory, 1. God put an honour upon the ark, and owned it as a token of his presence. The glory of it had been long diminished and eclipsed by its frequent removes, the meanness of its lodging, and its being exposed too much to common view; but God will not shew it is as dear to him as ever, and he will have it looked upon with as much veneration, as it was when Moses first brought

it into his tabernacle. 2. He testified his acceptance of the building and furnishing of the temple, as good service done to his name and his kingdom among men. 3. He struck an awe upon this great assembly; and by what they saw, confirmed their belief of what they read in the books of Moses, concerning the glory of God's appearances to their fathers, that hereby they might be kept close to the service of the God of Israel, and fortified against temptations to idolatry. 4. He shewed himself ready to hear the prayer Solomon was now about to make; and not only so, but took up his residence in this house, that all his praying people might there be encouraged to make their applications to him. But the glory of God appeared in a cloud, a dark cloud, to signify, (1.) The darkness of that dispensation in comparison with the light of the gospel, by which, *with open face we behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.* (2.) The darkness of our present state, in comparison with the vision of God, which will be the happiness of heaven, where the divine glory is unveiled. Now we can only say what he is not, but then we shall see him as he is.

12. ¶ Then spake Solomon, The LORD said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. 13. I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever. 14. And the king turned his face about, and blessed all the congregation of Israel; (and all the congregation of Israel stood.) 15. And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it, saying, 16. Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build an house, that my name might be therein; but I chose David to be over my people Israel. 17. And it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. 18. And the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart: 19. Nevertheless, thou shalt not build the house, but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name. 20. And the LORD hath performed his word that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised; and have built an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. 21. And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the LORD, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

Here is, 1. Solomon encourageth the priests, who came out of the temple from their ministration, much astonished at the dark cloud that overshadowed them. The disciples of Christ feared, when they entered into the cloud, though it was a bright cloud, *Luke ix. 34.* so did the priests when they found themselves wrapt in a thick cloud. To silence their fears, (1.) He minds them of God's presence, *ver. 12.* The Lord said, he would dwell in the thick darkness. It is so far from being a token of his displeasure, that it is an indication of his favour, for he had said, *I will appear in a cloud, Lev. xvi. 2.* Note, Nothing is more effectual to reconcile us to dark dispensations, than to consider what God hath said, as to compare his word and works together; as *Lec. x. 3.* That is that which the Lord hath said. God is light, *1 John i. 3.* and he dwells in light, *1 Tim. vi. 16.* but he dwells with men in the thick darkness, makes that his pavilion, because they could not bear the dazzling brightness of his glory: *Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself.* Thus our holy faith is exercised, and our holy tear increased; there where God dwells in light, faith is swallowed up in vision, and fear in love. (2.) He himself bids it welcome, as worthy of all acceptance; and since God by this cloud, came down to take possession, he doth in a few words solemnly give him possession, *ver. 13.* Surely I come, saith God. Amen, (saith Solomon) Even so, come Lord. The house is thine own, entirely thine own, I have surely built it for thee, and furnished it for thee; it is for ever thine own, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever; it shall never be alienated or converted to any other use; the ark shall never be removed from it, never unsettled again. It is Solomon's joy that God has taken possession; and it is his desire that he would keep possession. Let not the priests therefore dread that, in which Solomon so much triumphs.

2. He instructs the people, and gives them a plain account concerning this house, which they now saw God take possession of. He spoke briefly to the priests to satisfy them, a word to the wife; but turned his face about, *ver. 14.* from them to the congregation that stood in the outer court, and addressed himself to them largely.

1. He blessed them. When they saw the dark cloud enter the temple, they blessed themselves, being astonished at it, and afraid, lest the thick darkness should be utter darkness to them; the amazing sight, such as they had never seen in their days, we may suppose, drove every man to his prayers, and the vainest minds were made serious by it: Solomon therefore set in with their prayer, and blessed them all; as one having authority, (for the less is blessed of the better) in God's name he spake peace to them, and a blessing; like that with which the angel blessed Gideon, when he was in a fright upon a like occasion, *Judges vi. 22, 23.* Peace be unto thee, fear not, thou shalt not die. Solomon blessed them, i. e. he pacified them, and discharged them from the consternation they were in. To receive this blessing they all stood up, in token of reverence, and readiness to hear and accept it. It is a proper posture to be in when the blessing is pronounced.

2. He informed them concerning this house which he had built, and was now dedicating. He begins his account with a thankful acknowledgment of the good hand of God upon him hitherto: *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, ver. 15.* What we have the pleasure of, God must have the praise of. He thus engaged the congregation to lift up their hearts in thanksgivings to God, which would help to still the tumult of spirit which probably they were in. Come, saith he, let God's awful appearances not drive us from him, but draw us to him, *Let us bless the Lord God of Israel:* Thus Job under a dark scene, *blessed the name of the Lord.* Solomon here blessed God, (1.) For his promise which he spake with his mouth to David. (2.) For the performance: that he had now fulfilled it with his hand. We have then the sense of God's mercies, and most grateful both to ourselves and to our God, when

when we run up those streams to the fountain of the covenant, and compare what God doth with what he has said.

Solomon is now making a solemn surrender or dedication of this house unto God, delivering it to God by his own act and deed. Now we know, grants and conveyances commonly begin with recital of what has been before done, leading to what is now done: accordingly here is a recital of the special causes and considerations moving Solomon to build this house.

1. He recites the want of such a place. It was necessary this should be promised; for according to the dispensation they were under, there must be one place, in which they could expect God to record his name: If therefore there were any other chosen, this would be an usurpation: But he shews, from what God himself had said, that there was no other, *ver. 16. I chose no city to build a house in for my name*; therefore there is occasion for the building of this.

2. He recites David's purpose to build such a place. God chose the person first that should rule his people, (I chose David, *ver. 16.* and then put it into his heart to build an house for God's name, *ver. 17.*) It was not a project of his own, for the magnifying of himself, but his good father, of blessed memory, laid the first design of it, though he lived not to lay the first stone.

3. He recites God's promise concerning himself: God approved his father's purpose, *ver. 18. Thou didst well that it was in thine heart.* Note, Sincere intentions to do good shall be graciously approved and accepted of God, though providence prevent our putting them in execution. *The desire of a man is his kindness.* See 2 Cor. viii. 12. God accepted David's good-will, yet would not permit him to do the good work, but reserved the honour of it for his son, *ver. 19. He shall build the house to my name*; so that what he had done, was not of his own head, not for his own glory; but the work itself was according to his father's design, and his doing it was according to God's designation.

4. He recites what he himself had done, and with what intention; *I have built an house, not for my own name, but for the name of the Lord God of Israel, ver. 20. and set there a place for the ark, ver. 21.* Thus all the right, title, interest, claim and demand whatsoever, which he or his had or might have in or to this house, or any of its appurtenances, he resigns, surrenders, and gives up to God for ever; It is for his name, and his ark. In this, saith he, *the Lord hath performed the word that he spake.* Note, Whatever good we do, we must look upon it as the performance of our promises to him. The more we do for God, the more we are indebted to him; for our sufficiency is of him, and not of ourselves.

22. ¶ And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hand towards heaven; 23. And he said, LORD God of Israel, *there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepeth covenant and mercy with thy servants, that walk before thee with all their heart:* 24. Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day. 25. Therefore now, LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight, to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me, as thou hast walked before me: 26. And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father, 27. But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house that I have builded? 28. Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee to day: 29. That thine eyes may be opened towards this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servants shall make towards this place. 30. And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray towards this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and when thou hearest, forgive. 31. ¶ If any man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house: 32. Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head, and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness. 33. ¶ When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house: 34. Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land, which thou gavest unto their fathers. 35. ¶ When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray towards this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them: 36. Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk; and give rain upon thy land which thou hast given thy people for an inheritance. 37. ¶ If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their ene-

my besiege them in the land of their cities, whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness *there be*; 38. What prayer and supplication soever be *made* by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands towards this house: 39. Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest (for thou, *even* thou only knowest the hearts of all the children of men). 40. That they may fear thee all the days that they live, in the land that thou gavest unto our fathers. 41. Moreover, concerning a stranger that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country, for thy name's sake; 42. (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched-out arm) when he shall come and pray towards this house; 43. Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have builded, is called by thy name. 44. ¶ If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the LORD toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name; 45. Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. 46. If they sin against thee (for *there is* no man that sinneth not) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; 47. Yet if they shall bethink themselves, in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; 48. And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: 49. Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause, 50. And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them: 51. For they be thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron: 52. That thine eyes may be open upon the supplication of thy servant, and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto thee. 53. For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O LORD God.

Solomon having made a general surrender of this house to God, which God had signified his acceptance of by taking possession, next follows Solomon's prayer; in which he makes a more particular declaration of the uses of that surrender, with all humility and reverence, desiring that God would agree thereto: In short, it is his request that the temple might be deemed and taken not only for a house of sacrifice, no mention is made of that in all this prayer, that was taken for granted, but a *house of prayer for all people*; and herein it was a type of the gospel church, see *Ju. lvi. 7.* compared with *Matth. xxi. 13.* Therefore Solomon opened this house not only with an extraordinary sacrifice, but with an extraordinary prayer.

1. The person that prayed this prayer was great: Solomon did not appoint one of the priests to do it, or one of the prophets, but did it himself, in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, *ver. 22.* (1.) It was well he was able to do it; a sign he had made a good improvement of the pious education which his parents gave him. With all his learning it seems he learnt to pray well, and knew how to express himself to God in a suitable manner *pro re nata*, without a prescribed form. In the croud of his philosophical transactions, his proverbs and songs, he did not forget his devotions. He was a gainer by prayer, *chap. iii. 11.* and we may suppose gave himself much to it, so that he excelled as we find here, in praying gifts. (2.) It was well he was willing to do it, and not shy of performing divine service before so great a congregation: he was far from thinking it any disparagement to him to be his own chaplain, and the mouth of the assembly to God; and shall any think themselves too great to do this office for their own families? Solomon in all his other glory, even on his own ivory throne, looked not so great as he did now. Great men should thus support the reputation of religious exercises, and so honour God with their greatness. Solomon was herein a type of Christ the great intercessor for all over whom he rules.

2. The posture in which he prayed, it was very reverent, and expressive of humility, seriousness, and fervency in prayer. He stood before the altar of the Lord; intimating, that he expected the success of his prayer in the virtue of that great sacrifice which should be offered up in the fulness of time; typified by the sacrifices offered at that altar. But when he addressed himself to prayer, (1.) He kneeled down, as appears, *ver. 54.* where he is said to rise from his knees, compare 2 Chron. xi. 13. Kneeling is the most proper posture

posture for prayer, *Eph. iii. 14.* The greatest men must not think it below them to *kneel before the Lord their maker.* Mr. Herbert saith, "kneeling never spoiled silk stockings." (2.) *He spread forth his hands towards heaven;* and as it should seem by *ver. 54.* continued so to the end of the prayer, hereby expressing his desire towards, and expectations from God, as a *Father in heaven.* He spread forth his hands as it were to offer up the prayer from an open enlarged heart, and to reach it thitherward; and to receive the mercy thence, with both arms, which he prayed for. Such outward expressions of the fixedness and fervour of devotion, ought not to be despised or ridiculed.

3. The prayer itself was very long, and yet perhaps longer than it is here recorded. At the throne of grace we have liberty of speech, and should use our liberty. It is not making long prayers, but making them for a pretence, that Christ condemns.

Now in this excellent prayer, Solomon doth as we should in every prayer:

1. *He gives glory to God.* This he begins with, as the most proper act of adoration. He addresseth himself to God as the *Lord God of Israel,* a God in covenant with them. And, (1.) He gives him the praise of what he is in general; the best of beings in himself; *there is no God like thee,* none of the powers in heaven or earth to be compared with thee; and the best of masters to his people, *who keepst covenant and mercy with thy servants;* not only as good as thy word in keeping covenant, but better than thy word in keeping mercy, doing that for them which thou hast not given them an express promise of, provided they walk before thee with all their heart, are zealous for thee, with an eye to thee. (2.) He gives him thanks for what he had done in particular for his family, *ver. 24. Thou hast kept with thy servant David,* as with other thy servants, *that which thou promisedst him.* The promise was a great favour to him, his support and joy, and now performance is the crown of it: *Thou hast fulfilled it, as it is this day.* Fresh experiences of the truth of God's promises, call for enlarged praises.

2. He sues for grace and favour from God.

1. That God would perform to him and his the mercy which he had promised, *ver. 25, 26.* Observe how this comes in: He thankfully acknowledgeth the performance of the promise in part; hitherto God had been faithful to his word, *Thou hast kept with thy servant David that which thou promisedst him;* so far, that his son fills his throne, and has built the intended temple; *therefore now keep with thy servant David that which thou hast further promised him,* and which yet remains to be fulfilled in its season. Note, The experiences we have had of God's performing his promises, should encourage us to depend upon them, put them in suit, and plead them with God; and those who expect farther mercies, must be thankful for former mercies. Hitherto God has helped, *2 Cor. i. 10.* Solomon repeats the promise, *ver. 25. there shall not fail thee a man to sit on the throne,* not omitting the condition, *so that thy children take heed to their way;* for we cannot expect God's performance of the promise, but upon our performance of the condition: and then he humbly begs this entail, *ver. 26. Now, O God of Israel, let thy word be verified.* God's promises (as we have often observed) must be both the guide of our desires, and the ground of our hopes and expectations in prayer. David had prayed, *2 Sam. vii. 25. Lord, do as thou hast said.* Note, Children should learn of their godly parents how to pray, and plead in prayer.

2. That God would have respect to this temple, which he had now taken possession of, and that his eyes might be continually open towards it, *ver. 29.* That he would graciously own it, and so put an honour, and holiness upon it. To this purpose he promiseth, (1.) An humble admiration of God's gracious condescensions, *ver. 27. But will God indeed dwell on the earth?* Can we imagine that a being infinitely high, and holy, and happy, should stoop so low, as to let it be said of him, that he dwells upon the earth, and blesseth the worms of the earth with his presence? The earth that is corrupt, and overspread with sin: Cursed and reserved to fire! *Lord, how is it?* (2.) An humble acknowledgment of the incapacity of the house he had built, though very capacious, to contain God. *The heaven of heavens cannot do that,* for no place can include him, who is present in all places; even this house is too little, too mean to be the residence of him that is infinite in being and glory. Note, When we have done the most we can for God, we must acknowledge the infinite distance and disproportion that is between us and him, between our services, and his perfections.

This premised, he prays in general, (1.) That God would graciously hear and answer this prayer he was now praying, *ver. 28.* it was an humble prayer, *the prayer of thy servant;* an earnest prayer, such a prayer as is a cry; a prayer made in faith, before thee, as the Lord, and my God; *Lord, hearken to it; have respect to it,* not as the prayer of Israel's king, no man's dignity in the world, or titles of honour will recommend him to God; but as the prayer of thy servant. (2.) That God would in like manner hear and answer all the prayers that should at any time hereafter be made in or towards this house which he had now built, and of which God had said, *My name shall be there, ver. 29.* His own prayers; *Hearken to the prayers which thy servant shall make;* and the prayers of Israel, and of every particular Israelite, *ver. 30. Hear it in heaven,* that is indeed thy dwelling place, of which this is but a figure; and when thou hearest, forgive the sin that separates between them and God, even the iniquity of their holy things. (1.) He supposeth that God's people would ever be a praying people; he resolves to adhere to that duty himself. (2.) He directs them to have an eye to that place in their prayers where God was pleased to manifest his glory, so as he did not any where else on earth. None but priests might come into that place; but when they worshipped in the courts of the temple, it must be with an eye towards it; not as the object of their worship, that were idolatry; but as an instituted medium of their worship, helping the weakness of their faith, and typifying the mediation of Jesus Christ, who is the true temple, to whom we must have an eye in every thing wherein we have to do with God. They that were at a distance looked towards Jerusalem, for the sake of the temple, even when it was in ruins, *Dan. vi. 10.* (3.) He begs that God would hear the prayers and forgive the sins of all that look this way in their prayers; not as if he thought all the devout prayers offered up to God by those who had no knowledge of this house, or regard to it, were therefore rejected; but he desired that the sensible tokens of the divine presence with which this house was blessed, might always give sensible encouragement and comfort to believing petitioners.

More particularly, he here put divers cases in which he supposed application would be made to God by prayer, in or towards this house of prayer.

1. If God were appealed to by an oath for the determining of any controverted right between man and man, and the oath were taken before this altar, he prayed that God would some way or other discover the truth, and judge between the contending parties, *ver. 31, 32.* He prays that in difficult matters this throne of grace might be a throne of judgment, from which God would right the injured that believingly appealed to it, and punish the injurious that presumptuously appealed to it. It was usual to swear by the temple and altar; *Math. xxiii. 16, 18.* Which corruption perhaps took rise from this supposition of an oath taken not by the temple or altar, but at or near them, for the greater solemnity.

2. If the people of Israel were groaning under any national calamity, or

any particular Israelite under any personal calamity, he desires that the prayers they should make in or towards this house, might be heard and answered. (1.) In case of public judgements; war, *ver. 33.* want of rain, *ver. 35.* famine or pestilence, *ver. 37.* and he ends with an &c. any plague or sickness; for there is no calamity befalls other people, but it may light on God's Israel. Now he supposeth, (1.) That the cause of the judgment would be sin, and nothing else: If they be *smitten before the enemy,* it there be no rain, it is *because they have sinned against thee:* That is it that makes all the mischief. (2.) That the consequent of the judgment would be, that they would cry to God, and make supplication to him in or towards that house. Those that slighted him before, would solicit him then: *Lord in trouble have they visited thee: In their afflictions will they seek me early,* and earnestly. (3.) That the condition of the removal of the judgment was something more than bare praying for it. He could not, he would not ask that their prayer might be answered, unless they did also *turn from their sins,* *ver. 35.* and *turn again to God,* *ver. 34. i. e.* unless they did truly repent and reform: On no other terms may we look for salvation in this world or the other.—But in case they did thus qualify themselves for mercy, he prays, (1.) That God would hear from heaven, his holy temple above; to which they must look, through this temple. (2.) That he would forgive their sin, for judgements are then only removed in mercy, when sin is pardoned. (3.) That he would *teach them the good way wherein they should walk,* by his Spirit, with his word and prophets; and thus they might be both profited by their trouble, (for *blest is the man whom God chastens and teaches*) and prepared for deliverance; which then comes in love, when it finds us brought back to the good way of God and duty. (4.) That he would then remove the judgement, and redress the grievance, whatever it is; not only accept the prayer, but give in mercy prayed for.

(2.) In case of personal afflictions, *ver. 38, 39, 40.* If any man of Israel has an errand to thee, here let him find thee, here let him find favour with thee. He doth not instance in particulars; so numerous, so various are the grievances of the children of men: (1.) He supposeth that the complainants themselves would very sensibly feel from their own burden, and would open that case to God, which otherwise they kept to themselves, and did not make any acquainted with. *They shall know every man the plague of his own heart,* what it is that pains him, and, as we say, where the shoe pinches; and shall spread their hands, *i. e.* spread their case, as Hezekiah spread the letter in prayer, towards this house, whether the trouble be of body or mind, they shall represent it before God. Inward burthens seem especially meant; sin is the plague of our own heart, our indwelling corruptions are our spiritual diseases; every Israelite indeed endeavours to know these, that he may mortify them, and watch against the risings of them. These he complains of, this is the burden he groans under: *O wretched man that I am!* These drive him to his knees, drive him to the sanctuary, lamenting these, he spreads forth his hands in prayer. (2.) He refers all cases of this kind, that should be brought hither, to God. (1.) To his omniscience; *Thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men,* not only the plagues of their hearts, their several wants and burthens, (these he knows, but he will know them from us) but the desire and intent of the heart, the sincerity or hypocrisy of it: Thou knowest which prayer comes from the heart, and which from the lips only. The hearts of kings are not unsearchable to God. (2.) To his justice; *Give to every man according to his ways,* and he will not fail to do so by the rules of grace, not the law, for then we were all undone. (3.) To his mercy; hear, and forgive, and do, *ver. 39. that they may fear thee all their days,* *ver. 40.* This use we should make of the mercies of God to us in hearing our prayers, and forgiving our sins, we should thereby be engaged to fear him while we live: *Fear the Lord and his goodness; there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared.*

(3.) The case of the stranger that is not an Israelite is next mentioned, a proselyte that comes to the temple to pray to the God of Israel, being convinced of the folly and wickedness of worshipping the gods of his country. (1.) He supposeth there would be many such, *ver. 41, 42.* that the fame of God's great works which he had wrought for Israel, by which he proved himself to be above all gods, nay to be God alone, would reach to distant countries; they that live remote shall hear of thy strong hand, and thy stretched-out arm; and this will bring all thinking considerate people to pray towards this house, and they may obtain the favour of a God that is able to do them a real kindness. (2.) He begs that God would accept and answer the proselyte's prayer, *ver. 43. Do according to all that the stranger shall say to thee for.* Thus early, thus ancient were the indications of favour towards the sinners of the Gentiles: as there was then *one law for the native and for the stranger.* *Exod. xii. 49.* so there was one gospel for both. (3.) Herein he aims at the glory of God, and the propagating of the knowledge of him.—O let the stranger in a special manner speed well in his addresses, that he may carry away with him to his own country a good report of the God of Israel, *that all the people may know thee and fear thee,* (and if they know thee aright, they will fear thee) *as do thy people Israel.* So far is Solomon from monopolizing the knowledge and service of God, and wishing to have them confined to Israel only, (which was the envious desire of the Jews in the days of Christ and his apostles) that he prays, *that all the people might fear God as Israel did.* Would to God that all the children of men might receive the adoption, and be made God's children, *Father, thus glorify thy name.*

(4.) The case of an army going forth to battle, is next recommended by Solomon to the divine favour. It is supposed that the army is encamped at a distance, some where a great way off, sent by divine order against the enemy, *ver. 44.* when they are ready to engage, and consider the perils and doubtful issues of battle, and put up a prayer to God for protection and success, with their eye towards this city and temple, then hear their prayer, encourage their hearts, strengthen their hands, cover their heads, and so maintain their cause and give them victory. Soldiers in the field must not think it enough that they who tarry at home pray for them, but must pray for themselves, and they are encouraged to hope for a gracious answer. Praying should always go along with fighting.

5. The case of poor captives is the last that is here instanced in, as a proper object of divine compassion. 1. He supposeth that Israel would sin. He knew them and himself, and the nature of man too well to think this a foreign supposition, for there is no man that sinneth not, that doth not enough to justify God in the severest rebukes of his providence. No man but what is in danger of falling into gross sin, and will if God leave him to himself.

2. He supposeth what may well be expected, if Israel revolt from God, that God will be angry with them, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies, to be carried captive into a strange country, *ver. 46.* 3. He then supposeth that they will bethink themselves, will consider their ways; for afflictions put men upon consideration; and when once they are brought to consider, they will repent and pray, will confess their sins, and humble themselves, saying, *we have sinned, and have done perversely,* *ver. 47.* and will return to God in the land of their enemies, whom they had forsaken in their own land. 4. He supposeth that in their prayers they will look towards their own land, the holy land, Jerusalem the holy city, and the temple the holy house, and directs them so to do, *ver. 48.* for his sake who gave them that land, chose that city, and to whose honour that house was built. 5. He

He prays that then God would *hear their prayers, forgive their sins, plead their cause*, and incline their enemies to *have compassion on them*, ver. 49, 50. God hath all hearts in his hand, and can, when he pleaseth, turn the strongest stream the contrary way, and make those to pity his people who have been their most cruel persecutors. See this prayer answered, *Psal. cvi. 45. He made them to be pitied of those that carried them captive*, which, if it did not enlarge, yet eased their captivity. 6. He pleads their relation to God, and his interest in them; they are thy people whom thou hast taken into thy covenant, and under thy care and conduct, thine inheritance, from which, more than from any other nation, the rent of tribute and glory issues and arises, ver. 51. *separated from among all people to be so, and by distinguishing favours appropriated to thee*, ver. 53.

Lastly, After all these particulars he concludes with this general request, that God would hearken to all his praying people *in all that they call unto him for*, ver. 52. No place now under the gospel can be imagined to add any acceptableness to the prayers made in or towards it, as the temple then did; that it was a shadow, the substance is Christ, whatever we ask in his name it shall be given us.

54. And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees, with his hands spread up to heaven. 55. And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel, with a loud voice, saying, 56. Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. 57. The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us: 58. That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers, 59. And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the LORD, be nigh unto the LORD our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require: 60. That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else. 61. Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.

Solomon, after his sermon in Ecclesiastes gives us the conclusion of the whole matter, so he doth here after this long prayer; it is called his *blessing of the people*, ver. 55. he pronounced it standing, that he might be the better heard, and because he blessed as one having authority; never were words more fitly spoken, nor more penitently; never was congregation dismissed with that which was more likely to affect them and abide with them.

1. He gives God the glory of the great and kind things he had done for Israel, ver. 56. he stood up to *bless the congregation*, ver. 55. but begins with blessing God, for we must in *every thing give thanks*; do we expect God should do well for us and ours, let us take all occasions to speak well of him and his—He blesteth God who has given, he doth not say wealth, and honour, and power, and victory to Israel, but rest, as if that were a blessing more valuable than any of those; let not those that have rest, undervalue that blessing then, though they want the other.—He compares the blessings God had bestowed upon them, with the promises he had given them, that God might have the honour of his faithfulness, and the truth of that word of his, which he has *magnified above all his name*. (1.) He refers to the *promise given by the hand of Moses*, as he did, ver. 15—24. to those which were made to David; there were promises given by Moses, as well as precepts; it was long ere God gave Israel the promised rest, but they had it at last, after many toils; the day will come, when God's spiritual Israel will *rest from all their labours*. (2.) He doth, as it were, write a receipt in full on the back of the bond, *there has not failed one word of all his good promises*; this discharge he gives in the name of all Israel, to the everlasting honour of the divine faithfulness, and the everlasting encouragement of all those that build upon the divine promises.

2. He blesteth himself and the congregation, expressing his earnest desire and hopes of these four things. 1. The presence of God with them, that is all in all to the happiness of a church and nation, and of every particular person. This great congregation was now shortly to scatter, and it was not likely they should ever be altogether again in this world, Solomon therefore dismisseth them with this blessing, *The Lord be present with us*, and that will be comfort enough, when we are absent one from another; *The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers*, ver. 57. *let him not leave us*, let him be to us a day, and to ours for ever, what he was to those that went before us. 2. The power of grace upon them, *let him be with us*, and continue with us, not that he may enlarge our coasts, and increase our wealth, but *that he may incline our hearts to himself, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments*, ver. 58. Spiritual blessings are the best blessing, which we should covet earnestly to be blessed with; our hearts are naturally averse to our duty, and apt to decline from God, it is his grace that inclines them, grace that must be obtained by prayer. (3.) An answer to the prayer he had now made, *Let these my words be nigh unto the Lord God day and night*, ver. 59. Let a gracious return be made to every prayer that shall be made here, and that will be a continual answer to this prayer. What Solomon asks here for his prayer, is still granted in the intercession of Christ, which the supplication was a type of, that powerful prevailing intercession, *before the Lord our God day and night*; for our great advocate attends continually to this very thing, and we may depend on him to maintain our cause (against the adversary that accuseth us day and night, Rev. xii. 10.) and the common cause of his people Israel at all times, upon all occasions, as the matter shall require so as to speak for us the word of the day in its day, as the original here reads it, from which we shall receive grace sufficient, suitable and seasonable, in every time of need. (4.) The glorifying of God in the enlargement of his kingdom among men. Let Israel be thus blessed, thus favoured; not that all people may become tributaries to us. Solomon sees his kingdom as great as he desires, but that all people may know that the Lord is God, and he only, and may come and worship him, ver. 60. With this Solomon's prayers, like the prayers of his father David the son of Jesse, are ended, *Psal. lxxii. 19, 20. let the whole earth be filled with his glory*; we cannot close our prayers with a better summary than this. *Father glorify thy name.*

3. He solemnly charges his people to continue and persevere in their duty to God; having spoken to God for them, he here speaks for his prayer that were made better by his preaching; his admonition at parting is, *Let your heart be perfect with the Lord our God*, ver. 61. let your obedience be universal without dividing, upright without dissembling, and constant without declining; this is evangelical perfection.

62. ¶ And the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD. 63. And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace-offerings, which he offered unto the LORD, two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. 64. The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt-offerings, and meat-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings: because the brasen altar that was before the LORD was too little to receive the burnt-offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings. 65. And at that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven days, even fourteen days. 66. On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart, for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people.

We read before that Judah and Israel were eating and drinking, and very merry under their own vines and fig-trees, here we have them so in God's courts; now they found Solomon's words true concerning wisdom's ways, that they are ways of pleasantness.

(1.) They had a great deal of joy and satisfaction while they attended at God's house, for there, (1.) Solomon offered a great sacrifice, twenty-two thousand oxen, and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep, enough to have drained the country of cattle if it had not been a very fruitful land. The heathen thought themselves very generous when they offered sacrifices by the hundreds, hecatombs they called them, but Solomon outdid them, he offered them by thousands. When Moses dedicated his altar, the peace-offerings were twenty-four bullocks; rams, goats, and lambs, one hundred and eighty, *Numb. viii. 89.* then the people were poor, but now they were increased in wealth more was expected from them; where God sows plentifully he must reap accordingly. All these sacrifices could not be offered in one day, but in the several days of the feast; thirty oxen a day served Solomon's table, but thousands shall go to God's altar; few are thus minded, to spend more on their souls than on their bodies. The flesh of the peace-offerings which belonged to the officer, is likely Solomon treated the people with; Christ fed those who attended him. The brasen altar was not big enough to receive all these sacrifices, so that to serve the present occasion they were forced to offer many of them *in the middle of the court*, ver. 64. Some think on altars, altars of earth or stone erected for the purpose, and taken down when the solemnity was over, others think on the bare ground; they that will be generous in serving God, need not stint themselves for want of room and occasion to be so. (2.) He kept a feast, the feast of tabernacles, as it should seem, after the feast of dedication, and both together lasted fourteen days, ver. 65. yet they said not, *Behold, what a weariness it is?*

(2.) They carried this joy and satisfaction with them to their own houses. When they were dismissed, they blessed the king, ver. 66. applauded him, admired him, and returned him the thanks of the congregation; they went to their tents joyful and glad of heart, all easy and pleased: God's goodness was the matter of their joy, so it should be of ours at all times; they rejoice in God's blessing, both on the royal family and on the kingdom; thus should we go home rejoicing from holy ordinances, and go on our way rejoicing, for God's goodness to our Lord Jesus, of whom David his servant was a type in the advancement and establishment of his throne, pursuant to the covenant of redemption; and to all believers, his spiritual Israel, in their sanctification and consolation, pursuant to the covenant of grace; if we rejoice not herein always, it is our own fault.

C H A P. IX.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The answer which God in a vision gave to Solomon's prayer, and the terms he settled with him, ver. 1—9. (2.) The interchanging of grateful kindnesses between Solomon and Hiram, ver. 13, 14. (3.) His workmen and buildings, ver. 15—24. (4.) His devotion, ver. 25. (5.) His trading navy, ver. 26—28.

1. **A**ND it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all Solomon's house which he was pleased to do, 2. That the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon. 3. And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. 4. And if thou wilt walk before me as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgements: 5. Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever: as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. 6. But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments, and my statutes, which I have set before you, but go

and

and serve other gods, and worship them: 7. Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and Israel shall be a proverb, and a by-word among all people: 8. And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and to this house. 9. And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil.

God had given a real answer to Solomon's prayer, and token of his acceptance of it immediately, by the fire from heaven which consumed the sacrifices, as we find 2 Chron. vii. 1. but here we have a more express and distinct answer for it. Observe,

1. In what way God gave him this answer, he appeared to him, as he had done at Gibeon, in the beginning of his reign, in or dream a vision, ver. 2. the comparing of it with that intimates that it was the very night after he had finished the solemnities of his festival, for so that was, 2 Chron. i. 6, 7. And then, ver. 1. speaking of Solomon's finishing all his buildings, which was not till many years after the dedication of the temple, must be read thus, *Solomon finished*, as it is 2 Chron. vii. 11. and ver. 2. must be read, *and the Lord hath appeared*.

2. The purport of this answer.

1. He assures him of his special presence in the temple he had built, in answer to the prayer he had made, ver. 3. *I have hallowed this house*. Solomon had dedicated it, but it was God's prerogative to hallow it, to sanctify or consecrate it; man cannot make a place holy, yet what we in sincerity devote to God, we may hope he will graciously accept of as his; and his eyes and his heart shall be upon it. Apply it to persons, the living temples; those whom God hallows or sanctifies, whom he sets apart for himself, they have his eye, they have his heart, his love and care, and this perpetually.

2. He shews him that he and his people were for the future upon their good behaviour, let them not be secure now, as if they might live as they list now they had the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord among them, Jer. vii. 4. No, this house was designed to protect them in their allegiance to God, but not in their rebellion or disobedience; God deals plainly with us, sets before us good and evil, the blessing and the curse, and lets us know what we must trust to. God here tells Solomon,

1. That the establishment of his kingdom depended upon the constancy of his obedience, ver. 4, 5. *If thou wilt walk before me as David did*, who left thee a good example, and encouragement enough to follow it, an advantage thou wilt be accountable for if thou do not improve it, *if thou wilt walk as he did in integrity of heart and uprightness*, for that is the main matter, no religion but sincerity, then *I will establish the throne of thy kingdom*, and not otherwise, for on that condition the promise was made, Psal. cxxxii. 12. If we perform our part of the covenant, God will not fail to perform his; if we improve the grace God has given us, he will confirm us to the end. Let not the children of godly parents expect the entail of the blessing, unless they tread in the steps of those that are gone before them to heaven, and keep up the virtue and piety of their ancestors.

2. That the ruin of his kingdom would be the certain consequence of his or his children's apostasy from God, ver. 6. But know then, and let thy family and kingdom know it, and be astonished by it, that *if thou shalt altogether turn from following me*, (so it is thought it should be read) if you forsake my service, desert mine altar, and go and serve other gods, (for that was the covenant-breaking sin) if you or your children break off from me, this house will not save you. But, (1.) Israel, though a holy nation, will be cut off, ver. 7. by one judgment after another, till they become a proverb and a by-word, and the most despicable people under the sun, though now the most honourable; this supposeth the destruction of the royal family, though it is not particularly threatened; the king is of course undone, if the kingdom be. (2.) The temple, though a holy house, which God himself had hallowed for his name, should be abandoned and laid desolate, ver. 8, 9. *This house which is high*; they that now pass by it are astonished at the bulk and beauty of it, the richness, contrivance and workmanship are admired by all spectators, and it is called a stupendous fabric; but if you forsake God, its height will make its fall the more amazing, and they that pass by will be as much astonished at its ruins, and the guilty, self-condemned, self-condemned Israelites, will be forced to acknowledge with shame, that they themselves were the ruin of it; for when it shall be asked, *Why has the Lord done thus to his house?* They cannot but answer, it was because they forsook the Lord their God. See Deut. xxix. 24. Their sin will be read in their punishment, they deserted the temple, and therefore God deserted it; they profaned it with their sins, and laid it common, and therefore God profaned it with his judgments, and laid it waste. This God gave Solomon fair warning of, now he had newly built and dedicated it, that he and his people might not be high-minded, but fear.

10. ¶ And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD, and the king's house. 11. (Now Hiram the king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar-trees, and fir-trees, and with gold according to all his desire) that then king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. 12. And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him, and they pleased him not. 13. And he said, What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul unto this day. 14. And Hiram sent to the king sixscore talents of gold.

What agreement was made between Solomon and Hiram when the building-work was to be begun we read before, chap. v. here we have an account of their fair and friendly parting when the work was done.

1. Hiram made good his bargain to the utmost, he had furnished Solomon with materials for his buildings according to all his desire, ver. 14. So far was he from envying Solomon's growing greatness and reputation, and being jealous of him, that he helped to magnify him; Solomon's power with Solomon's wisdom need not be dreaded by any of his neighbours; God honours him, therefore Hiram will.

2. Solomon, no doubt, made good his bargain, and gave Hiram food for

his household, as was agreed, chap. v. 9. But here we are told that over and above that he gave him twenty cities, (small ones we may suppose, like those mentioned here, ver. 19.) in the land of Galilee, ver. 11. It should seem these were not allotted to any of the tribes of Israel, (for the border of Asher came up to them, Josh. xix. 27. which intimates that it did not include them) but continued in the hands of the natives till Solomon made himself master of them, and then made a present of them to Hiram; it becomes those that are great and good to be generous.—Hiram came to see these cities and did not like them, ver. 12. *they pleased him not*.—He called the country the land of Cabul, a Phœnician word (saith Josephus) which signifies displeasing, ver. 13. he therefore returned them back to Solomon, as we find, 2 Chron. viii. 2. who repaired them, and then *caused the Children of Israel to inhabit them*; which intimates, that before they did not; but when Solomon received back what he had given, no doubt he honourably gave Hiram an equivalent in something else. But what shall we think of this? Was Solomon paltry and sneaking, to give Hiram what was not worth his acceptance? Or was Hiram humoursome, and hard to please? I am willing to believe it was neither so nor so, the country was truly valuable, and the cities in it, but not agreeable to Hiram's genius; the Tyrians were merchants, trading men, that lived in fine houses, and were rich by navigation, but knew not how to value a country that was fit for corn and pasture, and that was business that lay out of their way, and therefore Hiram desired Solomon to take them again, he knew not what to do with them, and if he would please to gratify him, let it be in his own element, by coming in with him partner in trade, as we find he did, ver. 27. Hiram that was used to the clean streets of Tyre, could by no means agree with the dirty lanes in the land of Cabul, whereas the best lands have commonly the worst roads through them; see how the providence of God suits both the accommodations of this earth to the various dispositions of men, and the dispositions of men to the various accommodations of the earth, and all for the good of mankind in general; some take delight in husbandry, and wonder what pleasure sailors can take on a rough sea; others take as much delight in navigation, and wonder what pleasure husbandmen can take in a dirty country, like the land of Cabul; it is so in many other instances, in which we may observe the wisdom of him whose all souls are, and all lands.

15. ¶ And this is the reason of the levy, which king Solomon raised; for to build the house of the LORD and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer. 16. For Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up, and taken Gezer, and burnt it with fire, and slain the Canaanites that dwelt in the city, and given it for a present unto his daughter, Solomon's wife. 17. And Solomon built Gezer, and Beth-horon the nether. 18. And Baalah and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land. 19. And all the cities of store that Solomon had, and cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen, and that which Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion. 20. And all the people that were left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebuzites, which were not of the children of Israel. 21. Their children that were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel also were not able utterly to destroy, upon those did Solomon levy a tribute of bond-service unto this day. 22. But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no bond-men: but they were men of war, and his servants, and his princes, and his captains, and rulers of his chariots, and his horsemen, 23. These were the chief of the officers that were over Solomon's work, five hundred and fifty, which bare rule over the people that wrought in the work. 24. ¶ But Pharaoh's daughter came up out of the city of David, unto her house which Solomon had built for her, then did he build Millo. 25. ¶ And three times in a year did Solomon offer burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings, upon the altar which he built unto the LORD, and he burnt incense upon the altar that was before the LORD: so he finished the house. 26. ¶ And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red-sea, in the land of Edom. 27. And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. 28. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon.

We have here a further account of Solomon's greatness:

1. His buildings. He raised a great levy both of men and money, because he projected a great deal of building, which would both employ many hands, and put him to a vast expence, ver. 15. And he was a wise builder, who sat down first, and counted the cost, and would not begin to build till he found himself able to finish. Perhaps there was some complaint of the heaviness of the taxes, which the historian excuseth from the greatness of his undertakings; he raised it not for war, as other princes, which would spend the blood of his subjects, but for building, which would require only their labour and purses. Perhaps David observed Solomon's genius to lie towards building, and foresaw he would have his head and hands full of it, when he penned that song of degrees for Solomon, which begins, *Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain to build it*, Psal. cxxvii. 1. directing him to acknowledge God in all these ways, and by prayer and faith in his providence to take him along with him in all designs of this kind. And Solomon verily began his work at the right end, for he built God's house first, and finished that before he began his own, and then God blessed him, and he prospered in all his other buildings; if we begin with God, he will go on with us; let the first-fruits be his, and after-fruits will the more comfortably be ours, Matt. vi. 33. Solomon built a church first, and then he was enabled to build houses, and cities, and walls and what not? Those consult not their own interest, that defer to the last what they design for pious uses.

The further order in Solomon's buildings is observable, God's house first for religion, then his own for his own convenience, then a house for his wife, to which she removed as soon as it was ready for her, *ver. 24.* then Millo, the town-house or Guild-hall, then the wall of Jerusalem, the royal city, then some cities of note and strength in the country, which were decayed and unfortified, Hazor, Megiddo, &c. rebuilding these at his own charge, the inhabitants would be not only his subjects, but his tenants, which would increase the revenues of the crown for the benefit of his successors; among the rest he built Gezer, which Pharaoh took out of the hands of the Canaanites, and made a present to his daughter Solomon's wife, *ver. 16.* See how God maketh the earth to help the woman; Solomon was not himself a warlike prince, but the king of Egypt that was, took cities for him to build; then he built cities for convenience, for store, for his chariots, and for his horse-men, *ver. 19.* And lastly, he built for pleasure in Lebanon, for his hunting perhaps, or other diversions there; let piety begin, and profit proceed, and leave pleasure to the last.

1. His workmen and servants. In doing such great works, he must needs employ abundance of workmen. The honour of great men is borrowed from their inferiors, who do that which they have the credit of.

(1.) Solomon employed those which remained of the conquered and devoted nations in all the slavish work, *ver. 20, 21.* We may suppose they renounced their idolatry, and submitted to Solomon's government, so that he could not in honour utterly destroy them, and they were so poor, that he could not levy money on them, therefore he served himself of their labour. Herein he observed God's law, *Lev. xx. 44. Thy bondmen shall be of the heathen;* and fulfilled Noah's curse upon Canaan, *A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren,* *Gen. ix. 22.*

2. He employed Israelites in the more creditable services, *ver. 22, 23.* Of them he made no bondmen, for they were God's freemen, but he made them soldiers and courtiers, and gave them offices, as he saw them qualified, among his chariots and horse-men, appointing some to support the service of the inferior labourers. Thus he preserved the dignity and liberty of Israel, and honoured their relation to God as a kingdom of priests.

3. His piety and devotion, *ver. 25.* Three times in a year he offered burnt-offerings extraordinary, *viz.* at the three yearly feasts, the passover, pentecost, and feast of tabernacles, in honour of the divine institution; besides what he offered at other times, both statedly and upon special occasions. With his sacrifices he burnt incense, not himself, that was king Uzziah's crime, but the priest for him, at his charge, and to his particular use and behoof. It is said he offered on the altar which he himself built. He took care to build it, and then (1.) He himself made use of it. Many will assist others' devotions, that neglect their own. Solomon did not think his building an altar would excuse him from sacrificing, but rather engage him the more to it. (2.) He himself had the benefit and comfort of it. Whatever pains we take for the support of religion, to the glory of God, and the edification of others, we ourselves are likely to have the advantage of it.

4. His merchandise. He built a fleet of trading ships at Ezion-geber, *ver. 26.* a port on the coast of the Red sea the farther state of the Israelites, when they wandered in the wilderness, *Num. xxxii. 36.* It is probably, that wilderness now began to be peopled by the Edomites, which it was not then; To them this port had belonged, but David having subdued the Edomites, it now pertained to the crown of Judah. The fleet traded to Ophir in the East Indies; supposed to be that which is now called Ceylon. Gold was the commodity traded for; substantial wealth. It should seem Solomon had before gone partner with Hiram, or put a venture into his ships, which made him a rich return of one hundred and twenty talents, *ver. 14.* that encouraged him to build a fleet of his own. The success of others in any employment should quicken our industry; for in all labour there is profit. Solomon sent his own servants for factors, and merchants, and super-cargoes, but hired Tyrians for sailors, for they had knowledge of the sea, *ver. 27.* Thus one nation needs another, providence so ordering it, that there may be mutual commerce and assistance; for not only as Christians, but as men, we are members one of another. The fleet brought home to Solomon four hundred and twenty talents of gold, *ver. 28.* Canaan, the holy land, the glory of all lands, had no gold in it: which teaches us, that that part of the wealth of this world, which is for hoarding and trading, is not the best part of it, but that which is more immediately for the present support and comfort of life, our own and others; so the products of Canaan were. — Solomon got much by his merchandize, but it should seem David got much more by his conquests: what was Solomon's four hundred and twenty talents, to David's hundred thousand talents of gold? *1 Chron. xxii. 16.* — *xxix. 4.* Solomon got much by his merchandize, and yet has directed us to a better trade, within reach of the poorest, that the merchandize of wisdom is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold, *Prov. iii. 14.*

C H A P. X.

Still Solomon looks great, and every thing in this chapter adds to his magnificence. We read nothing indeed of his charity, of no hospitals he built, or alms-houses; he made his kingdom so rich that it did not need them; yet no question, many poor were relieved from the abundance of his table. A church he had built, never to be equalled; schools or colleges he need not build any, his own palace is an academy, and his court a rendezvous of wise and learned men, as well as the center of all the circulating riches of that part of the world. 1. What abundance of wisdom there was there, appears here by the application which the queen of Sheba made to him, and the great satisfaction she had in her entertainment there, *ver. 1—13.* and others likewise, *ver. 24.* 2. What abundance of wealth there was there appears here by the gold imported, with other things, yearly, *ver. 14, 15.* and in a triennial return, *ver. 22.* Gold presented, *ver. 25.* and gold used in targets and shields, *ver. 16, 17.* and vessels, *ver. 21.* — A stately throne he made, *ver. 18—20.* His chariots and horse-men, *ver. 26.* His trade with Egypt, *ver. 28, 29.* And the great plenty of silver and cedars among his people, *ver. 27.* So that putting all together, it must be owned, as it is here said, *ver. 23.* that king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches, and for wisdom: Yet what was he to the King of kings? Where Christ is by his word and spirit, Behold, a greater than Solomon is there.

1. **A**ND when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions. 2. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and pre-

cious stones; and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. 3. And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not. 4. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, 5. And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cup-bearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD: there was no more spirit in her. 6. And she said to the king. It was a true report that I heard in mine own land, of thy acts, and of thy wisdom. 7. Howbeit I believed not the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and behold, the half was not told me; thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. 8. Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. 9. Blessed be the LORD thy God which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel; because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice. 10. And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices, as these, which the queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon. 11. And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees and precious stones. 12. And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the LORD, and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug-trees, nor were seen unto this day. 13. And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, besides that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty: so she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants.

We have here an account of the visit which the queen of Sheba made to Solomon, no doubt when he was in the height of his piety and prosperity. Our Saviour calls her the queen of the south, for Sheba lay south from Canaan. The common opinion is, that it was in Africa; and the Christians in Ethiopia, to this day, are confident that she came from their country, and that Candace was her successor, who is mentioned, *Acts viii. 27.* But is more probably thought that she came from the south part of Arabia the Happy: It should seem she was a queen, regent, sovereign of her country. Many a kingdom had been prevented of its greatest blessings, if a Salic law had been admitted into its constitution. Observe,

1. On what errand the queen of Sheba came, not to treat of trade or commerce, to adjust the limits of their dominions, to court his alliance or their mutual strength, or his assistance against some common enemy, which are the common occasions of the congress of crowned heads, and their interviews: But she came. 1. To satisfy her curiosity, for she heard of his fame, especially for wisdom, and she came to prove him, whether he was so great a man as he was reported to be, *ver. 1.* Solomon's fleet sailed near the coast of her country, and probably might put in there for fresh water, and that way, or some other, she heard of the fame of Solomon, that he excelled in wisdom all the children of the east, and nothing would serve her, but she would go herself, and know the truth of it. 2. To receive instruction from him. She came to hear his wisdom, and thereby to improve her own, *Matth. xii. 22.* that she might be the better able to govern her own kingdom by his maxims of policy. Those whom God has called to any public employment, particularly the magistracy and ministry, should by all means possible be still improving themselves in that knowledge, which will more and more qualify them for it, and enable them to discharge their trust well. — But it should seem that which she chiefly aimed at, was to be instructed in the things of God; she was religiously inclined, and had heard not only of the fame of Solomon, but concerning the name of the Lord, *ver. 1.* the great name of that God whom Solomon worshipped, and from whom he received his wisdom, and with this God she desired to be better acquainted: Therefore doth our Saviour mention her enquiries after God by Solomon, as an aggravation of the stupidity of those who enquire not after God by our Lord Jesus Christ, though he having lain in his bosom, was much better able to instruct them.

2. With what equipage she came: With a very great retinue, agreeable to her rank, intending to try Solomon's wealth and generosity, as well as his wisdom, what entertainment he could and would give to a royal visitant, *ver. 2.* Yet she came not as one begging, but brought enough to bear her charges, and abundantly to recompense Solomon for his respects to her; nothing mean or common, but gold and precious stones, and spices, because she came to trade for wisdom, which she would purchase at any rate.

3. What entertainment Solomon gave her: he despised not the weakness of her sex, blamed her not for leaving her own business at home, to come so long a journey, and put herself and him to so much trouble and expence, merely to satisfy her curiosity; but bid her welcome, and all her train, gave her liberty to put all her questions, though some perhaps were frivolous, some captious, and some over curious, yet he allowed her to commune with him of all that was in her heart, *ver. 2.* and gave her a satisfactory answer to all her questions, *ver. 3.* whether natural, moral, politic, or divine. Were they designed to oppose him, he gave them such turns as abundantly satisfied her of his uncommon knowledge. Were they designed for her own instruction, (as we suppose most of them were) she received abundant instruction, from him, and he made things surprisingly easy, which she apprehended insuperably difficult, and satisfied her, that there was a divine sentence in the lips of this king. But he informed her no doubt with particular care concerning God, and his law, and instituted worship. He had taken it for granted, *chap. viii. 42.* that strangers would hear of his great name, and would come thither to enquire after him; and now so great a stranger came, we may be sure he was not wanting to assist and encourage her enquiries, and give her a rationale of the temple, and the officers and services of it, that she might be persuaded to serve the Lord whom she now sought.

4. How she was affected with what she saw and heard in Solomon's court.

Divers

Divers things are here mentioned which she admired; the buildings and furniture of his palace; the provision that was made every day for his table: When she saw that, perhaps she wondered where were months for all that meat; but when she saw the multitude of his attendants and guests, she was as ready to wonder where was the meat for all those mouths: The orderly sitting of his servants every one in his place, and the ready attendance of his ministers, without any confusion, their rich liveries, and the mighty decorum with which his cup-bearers waited at his table, these things she admired, as adding much to his magnificence: But above all these, the first thing mentioned, which contained all these, is his wisdom, *ver. 4.* which now she had incontestable proofs of the transcendence of: and the last thing mentioned, which crowned all, is his piety, the *ascent by which he went up to the house of the Lord*, with what gravity and seriousness, and an air of devotion in his countenance, he appeared, when he went to the temple to worship God; with as much humility then, as majesty at other times. Many of the ancient versions read it, *The burnt-offerings which he offered in the house of the Lord*, she observed with what a generous bounty he brought his sacrifices, and with what a pious fervour he attended the offering of them; never did she see so much goodness with so much greatness. Every thing was so surprising, that there was no more spirit in her, but she stood amazed; she had never seen the like.

5. How she expressed herself upon this occasion.

1. She owned her expectation far out-done, though it was highly raised by the report she heard, *ver. 6, 7.* She is far from repenting her journey, or calling herself a fool for undertaking it, but acknowledgeth, it was well worth her while to come so far for the sight of that which she could not believe the report of. Usually things are represented to us, both by common fame and our own imagination, much greater than we find them when we come to examine them; but here the truth outwent both fame and fancy. Those that through grace are brought to experience the delights of communion with God, will say, that the one half was told them of the pleasures of wisdom's ways and the advantages of her gates. Glorified saints much more will say, it was a true report which they heard of the happiness of heaven, but the thousandth part was not told them, *1 Cor. ii. 9.*

2. She pronounced them happy that constantly attended him, and waited on him at table, *Happy are they men, happy are these thy servants, ver. 8.* they may improve their own wisdom by hearing thine. She was tempted to envy them, and with herself one of them. Note, It is a great advantage to be in good families, and to have an opportunity of frequent converse with those that are wise and good and communicative: Many have this happiness, who know not how to value it.—With much more reason may we say this of Christ's servants, *Blessed are they that dwell in his house, they will be still praising him.*

3. She blessed God, the giver of Solomon's wisdom and wealth, and the author of his advancement, who had made him king, *1.* In kindness to him, that he might have the larger opportunity of doing good with his wisdom. He delighted in thee, to sit thee on the throne of Israel, *ver. 9.* Solomon's preferment began in the prophet's calling him *Jedidiah, because the Lord loved him, 2 Sam. xii. 25.* It more than doubles our comforts, if we have reason to hope they come from God's delight in us. *It was his pleasure concerning thee, (so it may be read) to sit thee on the throne; not for thy merit sake, but because it so seemed good unto him.* 2. In kindness to the people, *because the Lord loved Israel for ever*, designed them a lasting bliss, long to survive him that laid the foundations of it. He has made thee king, not that thou mayest live in pomp and pleasure, and do what thou wilt, but to do judgment and justice. This she kindly minded Solomon of, and no doubt he took it kindly. Both magistrates and ministers must be more solicitous to do the duty of their places, than to secure the honours and profits of them.—To this she attributes his prosperity, not to his wisdom, for bread is not always to the wise, *Ecc. ix. 11.* but *who so doth judgment and justice, it shall be well with him, Jer. xxii. 11.* Thus giving of thanks must be made for kings, for good kings, for such kings; they are what God makes them to be.

6. How they parted. (1.) She made a noble present to Solomon, of gold and spices, *ver. 10.* David had foretold concerning Solomon, that *to him should be given of the gold of Sheba, Psal. lxxii. 15.* The present of gold and spices which the wise men of the east brought to Christ, was signified by this, *Matt. ii. 11.* Thus she paid for the wisdom she had learned, and did not think she bought it dear. Those that are taught of God, let them give him their hearts, and the present will be more acceptable than this of gold and spices. Mention is made of the great abundance Solomon had of his own, notwithstanding she presented, and he accepted this gold. What we present to Christ, he needs it not, but will have us so to express our gratitude. The almug-trees are here spoken of, *ver. 11, 12.* as extraordinary, because perhaps much admired by the queen of Sheba. 2. Solomon was not behind hand with her. *He gave her whatsoever she asked*, patterns we may suppose of those things that were curious, by which she might make the like, or perhaps he gave her his precepts of wisdom and piety in writing, *besides that which he gave her of his royal bounty, ver. 13.* Thus they who apply themselves to our Lord Jesus, will find not only in him greater than Solomon, and wiser, but more kind; whatsoever we ask, it shall be done for us; nay, he will out of his divine bounty, which infinitely exceeds royal bounty, even Solomon's, do for us more than we are able to ask or think.

14. ¶ Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year, was six hundred threescore and six talents of gold. 15. Besides that he had of the merchantmen, and of the traffic of the spice-merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country. 16. ¶ And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold: six hundred shekels of gold went to one target. 17. And he made three hundred shields of beaten gold: three pounds of gold went to one shield: and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon. 18. ¶ Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with the best gold. 19. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round behind: and there were stays on either side on the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the stays. 20. And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps: there was not the like made in any kingdom. 21. ¶ And all king Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold, none were of silver; it was nothing accounted of in the days of

No. LII.*

Solomon. 22. For the king had at sea a navy of Tarshish, with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tarshish, bringing gold and silver, ivory, and apes and peacocks. 23. So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth, for riches and for wisdom. 24. ¶ And all the earth sought to Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. 25. And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armour, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year. 26. And Solomon gathered together chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he bestowed in the cities for chariots, and with the king at Jerusalem. 27. And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones, and cedars made he to be as the sycamore-trees that are in the vale for abundance. 28. ¶ And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price. 29. And a chariot came up and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, did they bring them out by their means.

We have here a farther account of Solomon's prosperity:

1. How he increased his wealth. Though he had much, he still coveted to have more, being willing to try the utmost the things of this world could do to make men happy. (1.) With what gold came from Ophir, *chap. ix. 20.* he brought so much into his country from other places, as that the whole amounted every year to *six hundred and sixty-six talents, ver. 14.* an ominous number, compare *Rev. xiii. 18.* and *Ezra ii. 13.* (2.) He received a great deal in customs from the merchants, and in land-taxes from the countries which his father had conquered, and made tributaries to Israel, *ver. 15.* (3.) He went partner with Hiram in a Tarshish fleet, of and from Tyre, which imported once in three years, not only gold, and silver, and ivory, substantial goods, and serviceable, but apes to play with, and peacocks to please the eye with their feathers, *ver. 22.* I wish this be not an evidence that Solomon and his people, being overcharged with prosperity, by this time grew childish and wanton. (4.) He had presents made him every year from the neighbouring princes and great men, to engage the continuance of his friendship, not so much because they feared him, or were jealous of him, as because they loved him, and admired his wisdom, had often occasion to consult him as an oracle, and sent him these presents by way of fee for his advice in politics, and (whether it became his grandeur and generosity or no, we will not enquire) he took all that came, even garments and spices, horses and mules, *ver. 24, 25.* (5.) He traded to Egypt for horses, linen yarn, (or as some read it, linen cloth) the staple commodities of that country, and had his own merchants or factors whom he employed in this traffic, and who were accountable to him, *ver. 28, 29.* The custom to be paid to the king of Egypt for exported chariots and horses out of Egypt was very high, but (as Bishop Patrick understands it) Solomon having married his daughter, got him to compound for the customs, so that he could bring them up cheaper than his neighbours, which obliged them to buy them of him, which he was wise enough, no doubt, to make his advantage of. This puts an honour upon the trading part of a nation, and sets a tradesman not so much below a gentleman as some place him, that Solomon, one of the greatest men that ever was, thought it no disparagement to him to deal in trade. In all labour there is profit.

2. What use he made of his wealth. He did not hoard it up in his coffers, that he might have it to look upon, and leave behind him. He has in his Ecclesiastes so much exposed the folly of hoarding, that we cannot suppose he should himself be guilty of it: No, God that had given him riches, and wealth, and honour, gave him also power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, *Eccles. v. 19.*

1. He laid out his gold in fine things for himself, which he might the better be allowed to do, when he had before laid out so much in fine things for the house of God. (1.) He made two hundred targets, and three hundred shields, of beaten gold, *ver. 16, 17.* not for service, but for state, to be carried before him, when he appeared in pomp; with us, magistrates have swords and maces carried before them, as the Romans their rods and axes, in token of their power to correct and punish the bad; to whom they are to be a terror: but Solomon had shields and targets carried before him, to signify, that he took more pleasure in using his power for the defence and protection of the good, to whom he would be a praise. Magistrates are *shields of the earth.* (2.) He made a stately throne, on which he sat to give laws to his subjects, audience to ambassadors, and judgment upon appeals, *ver. 18, 19, 20.* It was made of ivory, or elephants teeth, which was very rich, and yet, as if he had so much gold that he knew not what to do with it, he overlaid that with gold, the best gold. Yet some think he did not cover the ivory all over, but here and there: He rolled it, flowered it, or inlaid it, with gold. The stays or arms of this stately chair were supported by the effigies of lions in gold, so were the steps and paces by which he went up to it, to be a memorandum to him of that courage and resolution where-with he ought to execute judgment, not fearing the face of man. *The righteous, in that post, is bold as a lion.* (3.) He made all his drinking vessels, and all the furniture of his table, even at his country seat, of pure gold, *ver. 21.* He did not grudge himself what he had, but took the credit and comfort of it, such as it was. That is good that doeth us good.

2. He made it circulate among his subjects, so that the kingdom was as rich as the king; for he had no separate interests of his own to consult, but fought the welfare of his people. Those princes are not governed by Solomon's maxims, who think it policy to keep their subjects poor. Solomon was herein a type of Christ, who is not only rich himself but enricheth all that are his. Solomon was instrumental to bring so much gold into the country, and disperse it, that silver was nothing accounted of, *ver. 21.* There was such plenty of it in Jerusalem, that it was as the stones; and cedars, that used to be great rarities, as common as sycamore trees, *ver. 27.* Such is the nature of worldly wealth, plenty of it makes it the less valuable; much more should the enjoyment of spiritual riches lessen our esteem of all earthly possessions. If gold in abundance would make silver to seem so despicable, shall not wisdom and grace, and the foretastes of heaven, which are far better than gold, make it seem much more so?

Well, thus rich, thus great was Solomon, and thus did he exceed all the kings

kings of the earth, ver. 23. Now let us remember, 1. That this was he, who when he was *setting out in the world*, did not ask for the wealth and honour of it, but asked for a *wife and understanding heart*. The more moderate our desires are towards earthly things, the better qualified we are for the enjoyment of them, and the more likely we are to have them. See in Solomon's greatness the performance of God's promise, *chap. iii. 13.* and let it encourage us to *seek first the righteousness of God's kingdom*. 2. That this was he, who when he was in the midst of all these enjoyments, wrote a whole book to shew the vanity of all worldly things, and the vexation of spirit that attends them, their insufficiency to make us happy, and the folly of setting our hearts upon them; and to recommend to us the practice of serious godliness, as that which is the whole of man, and will do infinitely more towards the making of us easy and happy, than all the wealth and power that he was master of; and which, through the grace of God, is within our reach, when the thousandth part of Solomon's greatness is a thousand times more than we can ever be so vain as to promise ourselves in this world.

C H A P. XI.

This chapter begins with as melancholy a but as almost any we find in all the Bible: Hitherto we have read nothing of Solomon but what was great and good; but the lustre both of his goodness, and of his greatness, is here sullied and eclipsed, and his sun sets under a cloud. (1.) *The glory of his piety is stained by his departure from God and his duty in his latter days, marrying strange gods,* ver. 4—8. (2.) *The glory of his prosperity is stained, by God's displeasure against him, and the fruits of that displeasure.* (1.) *He sent him an angry message,* ver. 9—13. (2.) *He stirred up enemies, which gave him disturbance,* Hadad, ver. 14—22. Rezon, ver. 23—25. (3.) *He gave away ten tribes of his twelve from his posterity after him to Jeroboam, whom therefore he fought in vain to slay,* ver. 26—40. and this is all that remains here to be told concerning Solomon, but only his death and burial, ver. 41—43. for there is nothing perfect under the sun, but all is so above the sun.

1. **B**UT king Solomon loved many strange women (together with the daughter of Pharaoh) women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites: 2. Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. 3. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. 4. For it came to pass when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God as was the heart of David his father. 5. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. 7. Then did Solomon build an high-place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem: and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. 8. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense, and sacrificed unto their gods.

This is a sad story, and very surprising, of Solomon's defection and degeneracy.

1. Let us enquire into the occasions and particulars of it. Shall Solomon fall, that was the beauty of Israel, and so great a blessing of his generation? Yes, it is too true, and the scripture is faithful in relating it, and repeating it, and referring to it long after, *Neh. xiii. 26.* *There was no king like Solomon, who was beloved of his God, yet even him did outlandish women cause to sin:* there is the summary of his apostasy; it was the woman that deceived him, and was first in the transgression.

(1.) He doted on strange women, *many strange women*. Here his revolt began. 1. He gave himself to women, which his mother had particularly cautioned him against, *Prov. xxxi. 32.* *Give not thy strength unto women* (perhaps alluding to Samson, who lost his strength, by giving information of it to a woman) for it is that which as much as any thing destroys kings. His father David's fall began with the lusts of the flesh, which he should have taken warning by. The love of women has cast down many wounded, *Prov. vii. 26.* and many (saith Bishop Hall) have had their head broken by their own rib. 2. He took many women, so many, that at last they amounted to seven hundred wives, and three hundred concubines; a thousand in all, and not one good one among them, as he himself owns in his penitential sermon, *Ecd. vii. 28.* for no woman of established virtue would be one of such a rout. God had by his law particularly forbidden the kings to multiply either horses or wives, *Deut. xvii. 16, 17.* How he broke the former law in multiplying horses, and having them out of Egypt too, (which was expressly prohibited in that law) we read in the verse before, *chap. x. 29.* and here how he broke the latter (which proved of more fatal consequence) in multiplying wives. Note, Lesser sins made bold with, open the door to greater. David multiplied wives too much, and perhaps that made Solomon presume it lawful. Note, Those that are in reputation for religion, if in any thing they set an ill example, know not what a great deal of mischief they may do by it, particularly to their own children. One ill act of a good man may be of more pernicious consequence to others, than twenty of a wicked man. Probably Solomon when he began to multiply wives, intended not to exceed his father's number; but the way of sin is down-hill, they that are got into it, cannot easily stop themselves. Divine wisdom has appointed one woman for one man, did so at first; and they who do not think one enough, will not think two or three enow; unbridled lust will be unbounded, and the loosened hind will wander endlessly.

But this was not all: 3. They were strange women, Moabites, Ammonites, &c. of the nations of which God had particularly forbidden them to

intermarry with, ver. 2. Some think it was in policy that he married these foreigners, by them to get intelligence of the state of those countries: I rather fear it was because the daughters of Israel were too grave and modest for him, and those foreigners pleased him with the looseness and wantonness of their dress, and air, and conversation. Or perhaps it was looked upon as a piece of state to have his seraglio, as other his treasures, replenished with that which was far fetched, as if that were too great an honour for the best of his subjects, which would really have been a disgrace for the meanest of them, to be his mistresses. And, 4. To complete the mischief, *Solomon clave unto these in love*, ver. 2. He not only kept them, but was extravagantly fond of them, set his heart upon them, spent his time among them, thought every thing well they said and did, and despised Pharaoh's daughter, his rightful wife, who had been dear to him, and all the ladies of Israel, in comparison of them. Solomon was master of a great deal of knowledge, but to what purpose, when he had no better government of his appetites?

(2.) He was drawn by them to the worship of strange gods; as Israel to Baal-peor by the daughters of Moab. This was the ill consequence of his multiplying wives. We have reason to think it impaired his health, and hastened upon him the decays of age; it exhausted his treasure, which was vast indeed, but would soon find it little enough to maintain the pride and vanity of all these women: perhaps it occasioned him in this latter end to neglect his business, by which he lost his supplies from abroad, and was forced for the keeping up of his port, to burden his subjects with those taxes which they complained of, *chap. xii. 5.* But these consequences were nothing so bad as this, *His wives turned away his heart after other gods*, ver. 3, 4.

1. He grew cool and indifferent in his own religion, and remiss in the service of the God of Israel. *His heart was not perfect with the Lord his God*, ver. 4. nor did he follow him fully, ver. 6. like David. We cannot suppose that he quite cast off the worship of God, much less that he restrained or hindered it: the temple service went on as usual, but he grew less frequent, and less serious in his ascent to the house of the Lord, and his attendance on his altar; he lost his first love, lost his zeal for God, and did not persevere to the end as he had begun, therefore it is said he was not perfect, because he was not constant; and he followed not God fully, because he turned from following him, and did not continue to the end.—His father David had many faults, but he never neglected the worship of God, nor grew remiss in that as Solomon did, his wives using all their arts to divert him from it, and there began his apostasy.

2. He tolerated and maintained his wives in their idolatry, and made no scruple of joining with them in it: Pharaoh's daughter is profelyted (as is supposed) to the Jews religion, but when he began to grow careless in the worship of God himself, he used no means to convert his other wives to it; in compliance to them he built chapels for their gods, ver. 7, 8. maintained their priests, and occasionally did himself attend their altars; making a jest of it, asking what harm there was in it, were not all religions alike? which (saith Bishop Patrick) has been the disease of some great wits; when he humoured one thus, the rest would take it ill if he did not in like manner gratify them, so that he did it for all his wives, ver. 8. and at last came to that degree of impiety, that he set up an high place for Chemosh in the hill that is before Jerusalem, the mount of olives, as it were to confront the temple, which he himself had built; these high places continued here, not utterly demolished, till Josiah did it, 2 Kings xxiii. 13. this is the account here given of Solomon's apostasy.

3. Let us now pause awhile and lament Solomon's fall, and we may justly stand and wonder at it; *how is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!* Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be ye horribly afraid, as the prophet exclaims in a like case, *Jer. ii. 12.* Strange! 1. That Solomon in his old age should be ensnared with fleshly lusts, youthful lusts; as we must never presume upon the strength of our resolutions, so neither upon the weakness of our corruptions, so as to be secure and off our guard. 2. That so wise a man as Solomon was, so famed for a quick understanding and sound judgment, should suffer himself to be made such a fool of by a parcel of silly women. 3. That one who had so often and so plainly warned others of the danger of the love of women, should himself be so wretchedly bewitched with it; it is easier to see a mischief and to shew it others than to shun it ourselves. 4. That so good a man, so zealous for the worship of God, and that had been so conversant with divine things, who prayed that excellent prayer at the dedication of the temple, should do these things: Is this Solomon? Is all his wisdom and devotion come to this at last? Never was gallant ship so wrecked; never was crown so profaned.

What shall we say to this? (1.) Why God permitted it, it is not for us to enquire; his way is in the sea and his path in the great waters, he knew how to bring glory to himself out of it: God foresaw it, when he said concerning him that he should build the temple, *If he commit iniquity, &c.* 2 Sam. vii. 14. (2.) But it concerns us to inquire what good use we make of it. 1. Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall; we see how weak we are of ourselves without the grace of God; let us therefore live in a constant dependence on that grace. 2. See the danger of a prosperous condition, and how hard it is to overcome the temptations of it; Solomon, like Jeshurun, waxed fat, and then kicked; the food convenient, which Agur prayed for, is safer and better than the food abundant, which Solomon was even surfeited with. 3. See what need those have to stand upon their guard who have made a great profession of religion, and shewed themselves forward and zealous in devotion, because the devil will set upon them most violently, and if they miscarry themselves, the reproach is the greater; it is the evening that commends the day, let us therefore fear lest having run well we seem to come short.

9. ¶ And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, 10. And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. 11. Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. 12. Notwithstanding, in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. 13. Howbeit, I will not rend away all the kingdom: but will give one tribe to thy son, for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, which I have chosen.

Here is, 1. God's anger against Solomon for his sin, the thing he did *displayed the Lord*; time was when the Lord *loved Solomon*, 2 Sam. xii. 21. and delighted in him, chap. x. 9. but now *the Lord was angry with Solomon*, ver. 9. for there was in his sin, (1.) The most base ingratitude that could be, he turned from the Lord *which had appeared unto him twice*, once before he began to build the temple, chap. iii. 5. and once after he had dedicated it, chap. ix. 2. God keeps account of the gracious visits he makes us, whether we do or no; knows how often he has appeared to us, and appeared for us, and will remember it against us, if we *turn from him*: God's appearing to Solomon, was such a sensible confirmation of his faith, as should have for ever prevented his worshipping of *any other God*; it was also such a distinguishing favour, and put such an honour upon him, as he ought never to have forgotten, especially considering what God said to him in both these appearances. (2.) The most wilful disobedience; this was the very thing concerning which *God had commanded him, that he should not go after other gods*, yet he was not kept right by such an express admonition, ver. 10. Those who have dominion over men, are too apt to forget God's dominion over them; and while they demand obedience from their inferiors, to deny it to him, who is their Supreme.

2. The message he sent him hereupon, ver. 11. *The Lord said unto Solomon*, it is likely by a prophet, that he must expect to smart for his apostasy: And here, (1.) The sentence is just, that since he had revolted from God, part of his kingdom should revolt from his family; he had given God's glory to the creature, and therefore God would give his crown to his servant, *I will rend the kingdom from thee*, in thy posterity, and will *give it to thy servant*, who shall bear rule over much of that for which thou hast laboured; this was a great mortification to Solomon, who pleased himself no doubt, with the prospect of the entail of his rich kingdom upon his heirs for ever; sin brings ruin upon families, cuts off entails, alienates estates, and lays men's honour in the dust.—(2.) Yet the mitigations of it are very kind, for David's sake, ver. 12, 13. *i. e.* for the sake of the promise made to David, thus all the favour God shews to man is for *Christ's sake*, and for the sake of the covenant made with him; the kingdom shall be rent from Solomon's house, but, (1.) Not presently; Solomon shall not live to see it done, but it shall be rent out of the hand of his son, a son that was born to him by one of his strange wives, for his mother was an Ammonitess,—(1 Kings xiv. 31.) and probably had been a promoter of idolatry. What comfort can a man take in leaving children and an estate behind him, if he do not leave a blessing behind him! Yet if judgments be coming, it is a favour to us, if they come not in our days, as 2 Kings xx. 19. (2.) Not wholly; one tribe, that of Judah, the strongest and most numerous, shall remain to the house of David, ver. 13. for Jerusalem's sake, which David built, and for the sake of the temple there which Solomon built, these shall not go into other hands; Solomon did not quickly nor wholly turn away from God, therefore God did not quickly nor wholly take the kingdom from him.

Upon this message which God graciously sent to Solomon to awaken his conscience and bring him to repentance, we have reason to hope that he humbled himself before God, confessed his sin, begged pardon, and returned to his duty; that he then published his repentance in the book of Ecclesiastes, where he bitterly laments his own folly and madness, chap. vii. 25, 26. and warns others to take heed of the like evil courses, and to *fear God and keep his commandments*, in consideration of the judgment to come, which, it is likely, had made him tremble as it did Felix; that penitential sermon was as true an indication of a heart broken for sin, and turned from it, as David's penitential psalms, though of another nature; God's grace in his people works variously; thus though Solomon fell *he was not utterly cast down*; what God had said to David concerning him was fulfilled, *I will chasten him with the rod of men, but my mercy shall not depart from him*, 2 Sam. vii. 14, 15. Though God may punish those, whom he loves to fall into sin, he will not suffer them to lie still in it; Solomon's defection, though it was much his reproach, and a great blemish to his personal character, yet it did not so far break in upon the character of his reign, but that it was afterwards made the pattern of a good reign, 2 Chron. xi. 17. where they are said to do well, while they walked in the way of David and Solomon. But though we have all this reason to hope he repented and found mercy, yet the Holy Ghost did not think fit expressly to record it, but left it doubtful, for warning to others not to sin upon presumption of repenting, for it is but a peradventure whether God will give them repentance, or if he do, whether he will give the evidence of it to themselves or others; great sinners may recover themselves, and have the benefit of their repentance, and yet be denied both the comfort and credit of it, the guilt may be taken away, and yet not the reproach.

14. ¶ And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he *was* of the king's seed in Edom. 15. For it came to pass when David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the host was gone up to bury the slain, after he had smitten every male in Edom: 16. (For six months did Joab remain there with all Israel, until he had cut off every male in Edom): 17. That Hadad fled, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him to go into Egypt; Hadad *being* yet a little child. 18. And they arose out of Midian, and came to Paran, and they took men with them out of Paran, and they came to Egypt, unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, which gave him an house, and appointed him victuals, and gave him land. 19. And Hadad found great favour in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him to wife the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen. 20. And the sister of Tahpenes bare him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house: and Genubath was in Pharaoh's household, among the sons of Pharaoh. 21. And when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the captain of the host was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to mine own country. 22. Then Pharaoh said unto him, But what hast thou lacked with me, that behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country? And he answered, Nothing: Howbeit let me go in any wife. 23. ¶ And God stirred him up *another* adversary, Rezon, the son of Eliadah, which fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah. 24. And he gathered men unto

him, and became captain over a band, when David slew them of Zobah: and they went to Damascus, and dwelt therein, and reigned in Damascus. 25. And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad *did*: and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria.

While Solomon kept close to God and to his duty, there was *no adversary nor evil concurrent*, chap. v. 4. nothing to create him any disturbance or uneasiness in the least, but here we have an account of two adversaries that appeared against him, inconsiderable, and that could not have done any thing worth taking notice of, if Solomon had not first made God his enemy: What hurt could Hadad or Rezon have done to so great and powerful a king as Solomon was, if he had not by sin made himself mean and weak, and then those little people menace and insult him? If God be on our side we need not fear the greatest adversary, but if he be against us, he can make us fear the least, and the very grasshopper shall be a burden.

Both these adversaries God stirred up, ver. 14—23. though they themselves were moved by principles of ambition or revenge, God made use of them to serve his design of correcting Solomon; though the principal judgment threatened was deferred, *viz.* the rending of the kingdom from him, yet he himself was made to feel the smart of the rod, for his greater humiliation. Note, Whoever are any way adversaries to us, we must take notice of the hand of God stirring them up to be so, as he bid Shimei curse David; we must look through the instruments of our trouble to the author of it, and hear the Lord's controversy in it.

Both these adversaries had the original of their enmity to Solomon and Israel laid in David's time, and in his conquests of their respective countries, ver. 15—24. Solomon had the benefit and advantage of his father's successes, both in the enlargement of his dominion, and the increase of his treasure, and had never known any thing but the benefit of them, if he had kept close to God, but now he finds disadvantages to balance the advantages, and that David had made himself enemies, which were thorns in his eyes; they that are too free in giving provocation, ought to consider, that perhaps it may be remembered in time to come, and returned with interest to theirs after them; having so few friends in the world, it is our wisdom not to make ourselves more enemies than we needs must.

1. Hadad, an Edomite, was an adversary to Solomon; we are not told what he did against him, nor which way he gave him disturbance, only in general, that he was an adversary to him; but we are told, (1.) What induced him to bear Solomon a grudge. David had conquered Edom, 2 Sam. viii. 14. Joab put all the males to the sword, ver. 15, 16. a terrible execution he made, avenging on Edom their old enmity to Israel, yet perhaps with too great a severity; from this general slaughter, while Joab was burying the slain, (for he left not alive of their own people to bury them; and buried they must be, or they would be an annoyance to the country, Ezek. xxxix. 12.) Hadad, a branch of the royal family, then a little child, was taken and preserved by some of the king's servants, and brought to Egypt, ver. 17. They halted by the way, in Midian first, and then in Paran, where they furnished themselves with men, not to fight for them, or force their passage, but to attend them, that their young master might come into Egypt with an equipage agreeable to his quality; there he was kindly sheltered and entertained by Pharaoh, as a distressed prince, was well provided for, and so recommended himself, that in process of time he married the queen's sister, ver. 19. and by her had a child, which the queen herself took such a kindness to, that she brought him up in Pharaoh's house, among the king's children. (2.) What enabled him to do Solomon a mischief. He returned to his own country again upon the death of David and Joab, in which it should seem he settled, and remained quiet while Solomon continued wife and watchful for the public good, but from which he had opportunity of making inroads upon Israel, when Solomon having sinned away his wisdom, as Sam'ndid his strength, (and in the same way) grew careless of public affairs, was off his guard himself, and had forfeited the divine protection. What vexation he gave to Solomon we are not here told, but only how loth Pharaoh was to part with him, and how earnestly he solicited his stay, ver. 22. *What hast thou lacked with me?* Nothing, saith Hadad; but however, let me go to my own country, my native air, my native soil. Peter Martyr has a pious reflection upon this; 'That heaven is our home, and we ought to keep up a holy affection to that, and desire towards it, even then when the world, the place of our banishment, smiles most upon us; doth it ask, what have we lacked, that we are so willing to be gone, we may answer, nothing that the world can do for us; but, however, let us go thither, where our hope, and honour, and treasure is.'

2. Rezon, a Syrian, was another adversary to Solomon; when David conquered the Syrians, he headed the remains, lived at large by spoil and rapine, till Solomon grew careless, and then he got possession of Damascus, reigned there, ver. 24. and over the country about, ver. 25. and he created troubles to Israel, probably in conjunction with Hadad, all the days of Solomon, *viz.* after his apostasy; or he was an enemy to Israel during all Solomon's reign, and upon all occasions vented his then impotent malice against them; but till Solomon's revolt, when his defence was departed from him, he could not do them any mischief; it is said of him, that he abhorred Israel; other princes loved and admired Israel and Solomon, and courted their friendship, but here was one that abhorred them; the greatest and best of princes and people, that are never so much respected by the most, yet perhaps will be hated and abhorred by some.

26. ¶ And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zereda, Solomon's servant (whose mother's name *was* Zeruah, a widow woman) even he lift up *his* hand against the king. 27. And this *was* the cause that he lifted up *his* hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breaches of the city of David his father. 28. And the man Jeroboam *was* a mighty man of valour: And Solomon seeing the young man, that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph. 29. And it came to pass at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way: and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two *were* alone in the field. 30. And Ahijah caught the new garment that *was* on him, and rent it in twelve pieces. 31. And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the

the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: 32. (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel). 33. Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father. 34. Howbeit, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life, for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes: 35. But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes. 36. And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there. 37. And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel. 38. And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee. 39. And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever. 40. Solomon fought therefore to kill Jeroboam: and Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.

We have here the first mention of that infamous name Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that made Israel to sin; he is here brought upon the stage as an adversary to Solomon, whom God had expressly told, ver. 11. that he would give the greatest part of his kingdom to his servant, and Jeroboam was the man. We have here an account,

1. Of his extraction, ver. 26. he was of the tribe of Ephraim, the next in honour to Judah, his mother was a widow, to whom providence made up the loss of a husband in a son that was active and ingenious, and (we may suppose) a great support and comfort to her.

2. Of his elevation. It was Solomon's wisdom, when he had work to do, to employ proper persons in it; he observed Jeroboam to be a very industrious young man, one that minded his business, took a pleasure in it, and did it with all his might, and therefore he gradually advanced him, till at length he made him receiver-general for the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasse, or perhaps put him into an office equivalent to that of lord-lieutenant of those two counties, for he was ruler of the burden, or tribute, i. e. either of the taxes, or of the militia of the house of Joseph. Note, Industry is the way to preferment, *Seekest thou a man diligent in his business, that will take care and pains, and go through with it, he shall stand before kings, and not always be on the level with mean men; observe a difference between David, and both his predecessor, and his successor; when Saul saw a valiant man, he took him to himself, 1 Sam. xiv. 52. when Solomon saw an industrious man, he preferred him; but David's eyes were upon the faithful in the land, that they might dwell with him: if he saw a godly man, he preferred him, for he was a man after God's own heart, whose countenance beholds the upright.*

3. Of his designation to the government of the ten tribes, after the death of Solomon. Some think, he was himself plotting, against Solomon, and contriving to rise to the throne, that he was turbulent and aspiring: The Jews say, that when he was employed by Solomon in building Millo, he took opportunities of reflecting upon Solomon as oppressive to his people, and suggesting that which would alienate them from his government, it is not indeed probable he should say much to that purpose, for Solomon would have got notice of it, and it would have baulked his preferment, but it is plainly intimated that he had it in his thoughts, for the prophet tells him, ver. 37. *Thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth; but this was the cause, or rather, this was the story of his lifting up of his hand against the king, he made him ruler over the tribes of Joseph, and as he was going to take possession of his government, he was told by a prophet in God's name, that he should be king, which emboldened him to aim high, and in some instances to oppose the king, and give him some vexation.*

1. The prophet, by whom this message was sent, was Ahijah of Shiloh, we shall read of him again, chap. xiv. 2. it seems Shiloh was not so perfectly forsaken and forgotten of God, but that in remembrance of the former days it was blessed with a prophet; he delivered himself to Jeroboam in the way, his servants being probably ordered to retire, as in a like case, 1 Sam. ix. 27. when Samuel delivered his message to Saul; God's word was not the less sacred and sure for being delivered to him thus obscurely, under a hedge it may be.

2. The sign by which it was represented to him, was the rending of a garment into twelve pieces, and giving him ten, ver. 30. It is not certain whether the garment was Jeroboam's, as it is commonly taken for granted, or Ahijah's, which is more probable, he (i. e. the prophet) had clad himself with a new garment, on purpose that he might with it give him a sign: the rending of the kingdom from Saul was signified by the rending of Samuel's mantle, not Saul's, 1 Sam. xv. 27, 28. and it was more significant to give him ten pieces of that which was not his own before, than of that which was; the prophets, both true and false, used such signs, even in the New Testament, as Agabus, Acts xxi. 11.

3. The message itself, which is very particular.

(1.) He assures him, that he should be king over ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, ver. 11. the meanness of his extraction and employment should be no hindrance to his advancement, when the God of Israel saith, (by whom kings reign) *I will give ten tribes unto thee.*

(2.) He tells him the reason, not for his good character or deserts, but for the chastising of Solomon's apostasy, because he and his family, and many of his people with him, have forsaken me, and worshipped other gods, ver. 33. it was because they had done ill, not because he was likely to do much better; thus Israel must know it is not for their righteousness, that they are made masters of Canaan, but for the wickedness of the Canaanites, Deut. ix. 4. Jeroboam did not deserve so good a post, but Israel deserved so

bad a prince. In telling him that the reason why he rent the kingdom from the house of Solomon was, because they had forsaken God, he warns him to take heed of sinning away his preferment in like manner.

(3.) He limits his expectations to the ten tribes only, and to them in reversion after the death of Solomon: lest he should aim at the whole, and give immediate disturbance to Solomon's government; he is here told, 1. That two tribes (called here one tribe, because little Benjamin was in a manner lost in the thousands of Judah) should remain sure to the house of David, and he must never make any attempt upon them. *He shall have one tribe, ver. 32. and again, ver. 36. That David may have a lamp, i. e. a shining name and memory, Psal. cxxxii. 17. and his family, as a royal family, might not be extinct. He must not think that David was rejected, as Saul was; no, God would not take his loving-kindness from him, as he did from Saul. The house of David must be supported and kept in reputation for all this, because out of it the Messiah must arise. Destroy it not, for that blessing is in it.* 2. That Solomon must keep possession during his life, ver. 34, 35. Jeroboam therefore must not offer to dethrone him, but wait with patience till his day shall come to fall. Solomon shall be prince all the days of his life, not for his own sake, he had forfeited his crown to the justice of God, but for David my servant's sake, because he kept my commandments. Children that do not tread in their parents steps, yet often fare the better in this world for their good parents piety.

(4.) He is given to understand, that he will be upon his good behaviour: The grant of the crown must run *quam diu se bene gesserit*; If thou wilt do what is right in my sight, I will build thee a sure house, and not otherwise, ver. 38. intimating, that if he forsook God, even his advancement to the throne, would in time lay his family in the dust; whereas the seed of David, though afflicted, should not be afflicted for ever, ver. 39. but should flourish again, as it did in many of the illustrious kings of Judah, who reigned in glory, when Jeroboam's family was extirpated.

4. Jeroboam's flight into Egypt hereupon, ver. 40. Some way or other Solomon came to know of all this; probably from Jeroboam's own talk of it; he could not conceal it, as Saul did, nor keep his own counsel; if he had, he might have staid in his own country, and been preparing there for his future advancement; but letting it be known, (1.) Solomon foolishly fought to kill his successor. Had not he taught others, that whatever devices are in men's hearts, the counsel of the Lord shall stand? And yet doth he himself think to defeat that counsel? (2.) Jeroboam prudently withdrew into Egypt; though God's promise would have secured him any where, yet he would use means for his own preservation, and was well content to live in exile and obscurity for a while, being sure of a kingdom at last. And shall not we be so, who have a better kingdom in reserve?

41. ¶ And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? 42. And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem, over all Israel, was forty years. 43. And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

We have here the conclusion of Solomon's story, and in it, 1. Reference is had to another history then extant, but (not being divinely inspired) since lost, the books of the acts of Solomon, ver. 41. Probably this book was writ by a chronologer or historiographer, whom he employed to write his annals, out of which the sacred writer extracted what God saw fit to transmit to the church. 2. A summary of the years of his reign, ver. 42. *He reigned in Jerusalem* (not as his father, part of his time in Hebron, and part in Jerusalem) *over all Israel*, (not as his son, and his father in the beginning of his time, over Judah only) *forty years.* His reign was as long as his father's, but not his life. Sin shortened his days. 3. His death and burial, and successor, ver. 43. (1.) He followed his fathers to the grave; slept with them, and was buried in David's burying-place, with honour, no doubt. (2.) His son followed him in the throne. Thus the graves are in filling with the generations that go off, and houses are in filling with those that are growing up. As the grave cries, Give, give; so land is never lost for want of an heir.

C H A P. XII.

The glory of the kingdom of Israel was in its height and perfection in Solomon; it was long in coming to it, but it soon declined, and began to sink and wither in the very next reign; as we find in this chapter, where we have the kingdom divided, and thereby weakened and made little in comparison with what it had been. Here is, (1.) Rehoboam's accession to the throne, and Jeroboam's return out of Egypt, ver. 1, 2. (2.) The people's petition to Rehoboam for the redress of grievances, and the rough answer he gave, by the advice of his young counsellors, to that petition, ver. 3—15. (3.) The revolt of the ten tribes thereupon, and their setting up of Jeroboam, ver. 16—20. (4.) Rehoboam's attempt to reduce them, and the prohibition God gave to that attempt, ver. 21—24. (5.) Jeroboam's establishment of his government upon idolatry, ver. 25—33. Thus did Judah become weak, being deserted by their brethren; and Israel, by deserting the house of the Lord.

1. **A**ND Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king. 2. And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt,) 3. That they sent and called him: and Jeroboam, and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, 4. Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee. 5. And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed. 6. And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men that stood before Solomon his father; while he yet lived, and said, How do you advise, that I may answer this people? 7. And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto

unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. 8. But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him: 9. And he said unto them, What counsel give ye, that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us, lighter? 10. And the young men that were grown up with him, spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. 11. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. 12. ¶ So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day. 13. And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; 14. And spake to them after the counsel of the young men saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. 15. Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

Solomon had a thousand wives and concubines, yet we read but of one son he had to bear up his name, and he a fool. It is said, *Hof. iv. 10. They shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase.* Sin is an ill way of building up a family. Rehoboam was the son of the wisest of men, yet did not inherit his father's wisdom, and then it stood him in little stead to inherit his father's throne. Neither wisdom nor grace ran in a blood. Solomon came to the crown very young, yet he was then a wise man: Rehoboam, at forty years old, when men will be wise if ever they will, yet he was then foolish. Wisdom doth not go by age, nor is it the multitude of years, nor the advantage of education that teaches it. Solomon's court was a mart of wisdom, and the rendezvous of learned men, and Rehoboam the darling of the court; and yet all was not sufficient to make him a wise man: *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.* No dispute is made of Rehoboam's succession, upon the death of his father he was immediately proclaimed: But,

1. The people desire a treaty with him at Shechem, and he condescends to meet them there. (1.) Their pretence was to make him king, but the design was to unmake him. They would give him a public inauguration, in another place than the city of David, that he might not seem to be king of Judah only: They have ten parts in him, and will have him among themselves for once, that they might recognize his title. (2.) The place was ominous; at Shechem, where Abimelech set up himself, *Judg. ix.* yet had been famous for the convention of the states there, *Josh. xxiv. 1.* We may suppose Rehoboam knew of the threatening that the kingdom should be rent from him, and hoped by going to Shechem, and treating there with the ten tribes, to prevent it: yet it proves the most impolitic thing he could do, and hastens the rupture.

2. The representatives of the tribes address to him to be eased of the taxes they were burdened with. The meeting being appointed, they sent for Jeroboam out of Egypt to come and be their speaker: which they needed not to have done, he knew what God had designed him for, and would have come, though he had not been sent for, for now was his time to expect the possession of the promised crown. In their address, (1.) They complain of the last reign; *Thy father made our yoke grievous*, ver. 4. They complain not of his father's idolatry, and revolt from God, that which was the greatest grievance of all was none to them; so careless and indifferent were they in matters of religion, as if God or Moloch were all one, so they might but live at ease, and pay no taxes. Yet the complaint was groundless and unjust: Never did people live more at ease than they did, or in greater plenty. Did they pay taxes? It was to advance the strength and magnificence of their kingdom. If Solomon's buildings cost them money, they cost them no blood, as war would do. Were many servile hands employed about them? They were not the hands of the Israelites. Were the taxes a burden! How could that be, when Solomon imported bullion in such plenty, that silver was in a manner as common as the stones? So that they did but render to Solomon the things that were Solomon's. Nay, suppose there was some hardship put upon them, were they not told before, that this would be the manner of the king, and yet they would have one. The best government cannot secure itself from reproach and censure, no not Solomon's. Factions will never want something to complain of. I know nothing in Solomon's administration, that could make the people's yoke grievous, unless, perhaps, the women which in his latter days he doted on, were connived at in oppressing them. (2.) They demanded relief from him, and on that condition will continue in their allegiance to the house of David: They asked not to be wholly free from paying taxes, but to have the burden made lighter; that was all their care, to save their money, whether their religion was supported, and the government protected or no. All seek their own.

3. Rehoboam consulted with those about him what answer he should give to this address. It was prudent to take advice, especially, having so weak a head of his own; yet upon this occasion, it was impolitic to take time himself to consider, for thereby he gave time to the disaffected people to ripen things for a revolt: and his deliberating in so plain a case, would be improved as an indication of the little concern he had for the people's ease: They saw what they must expect, and prepared accordingly. Now,

(1.) The grave experienced men of his counsel advised him by all means to give the petitioners a kind answer, to speak them fair, and promise them fair, and this day, this critical day to serve them, *i. e.* tell them, that he was their humble servant, and that he would redress all their grievances, and make it his business to please them, and make them easy. Deny thyself

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(say they) so far as to do this, for this once, and they will be thy servants for ever. When the present heat is allayed with a soft answer, and the assembly dismissed, their cooler thoughts would reconcile and fix them to Solomon's family still. Note, The way to rule is to serve, to do good, and stoop to do it; to become all things to all men, and so win their hearts: Those in any power really sit highest, and easiest, and safest, that do so.

(2.) The young men of his council were hot and haughty, and they advised him to return a severe and threatening answer to the people's demands. It was an instance of Rehoboam's wickedness, 1. That he did not affect aged counsellors, but had a better opinion of the young men that had grown up with him, and with whom he was familiar, ver. 8. days should speak. It was a folly for him to think that because they had been his agreeable companions in the sports and pleasures of his youth, they were therefore fit to have the management of the affairs of his kingdom. Great wits have not always the most wisdom; nor are those to be relied on as our best friends, that know how to make us merry, for that will not make us happy. It is of great consequence to young people that are setting out in the world, whom they associate with, accommodate themselves to, and depend upon for advice. If they reckon those that feed their pride, gratify their vanity, and farther them in their pleasures, their best friends, they are already marked for ruin. 2. That he did not affect moderate counsels; but was pleased with those that put him upon harsh and rigorous methods, and advised him to double the taxes, whether there was occasion for it or no; and to tell them in plain terms, that he would do so, ver. 11, 12. They thought the old men expressed themselves but dully, ver. 7. they affect to be witty in their advice, and value themselves by that. The old men did not undertake to put words into Rehoboam's mouth, only counselled him to speak good words; but the young men will furnish him with very quaint and pretty phrases, and pert similitudes; *My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins*; &c. That it not always the best sense, that is best worded.

4. He answered the people according to the counsel of the young men, ver. 14, 15. He affected to be haughty and imperious, and fancied he could carry all before him with a high hand, and therefore would rather run the risque of losing them, than deny himself so far as to give them good words. Note, many ruin themselves by consulting their humour more than their interest.

See, 1. How Rehoboam was infatuated in his counsels. He could not have acted more foolishly and impolitely. 1. He owned their reflections upon his father's government to be true, *my father made your yoke heavy*; and therein was unjust to his father's memory, which he might easily have vindicated from the imputation. 2. He fancied himself better able to manage them, and impose upon them, than his father was, not considering that he was vastly inferior to him in conduct. Could he think to support the blemishes of his father's reign, who could never pretend to come near the glories of it? 3. He threatened not only to squeeze them by taxes, but to chastise them by cruel laws, and severe executions of them; which should not be as whips only, but as scorpions, whips with rowels in them, that will fetch blood at every lash. In short, he would use them as brute beasts, load them, and beat them at his pleasure; not caring whether they loved him or no, he would make them fear him. 4. He gave this provocation to a people that by long ease and prosperity were made wealthy, and strong, and proud, and would not be trampled upon, as a poor cowed dispirited people may; that were now disposed to revolt, and had one ready to head them. Sure never was man so blinded by pride and affection of arbitrary power, than which nothing more fatal.

2. How God's counsels were hereby fulfilled. It was from the Lord, ver. 15. He left Rehoboam to his own folly, and hid from his eyes the things which belonged to his peace, that the kingdom might be rent from him. Note, God serves his own wise and righteous purposes, by the imprudencies and iniquities of men, and snares sinners in the work of their own hands. They that lose the kingdom of heaven, throw it away, as Rehoboam did his, by their own wilfulness and folly.

16. ¶ So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents. 17. But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. 18. Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died: therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. 19. So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day. 20. And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only. 21. ¶ And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. 22. But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 23. Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, 24. Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house, for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the word of the LORD.

We have here the rending of the kingdom of the ten tribes from the house of David; to effect which,

1. The people were bold and resolute in their revolt. They highly resented the provocation that Rehoboam had given them, were incited at his menaces, concluded that government would in the progress of it be intolerably grievous, which in the beginning of it was to very haughty; and therefore

therefore immediately came to this resolve, one and all, *What portion have we in David?* ver. 16. They speak here very unbecomingly of David, that great benefactor of their nation, calling him *the son of Jesse*, no greater a man than his neighbours. How soon are good men, and their good services to the public forgotten! The rashness of their resolution was also much to be blamed; in time, and with prudent management, they might have settled the original contract with Rehoboam, to mutual satisfaction: Had they enquired who gave Rehoboam this advice, and taken a course to remove those evil counsellors from about him, the rupture might have been prevented: otherwise their jealousy for their liberty and property well became that free people. *Israel is not a servant, is not a home-born slave, why should he be spoiled?* Jer. ii. 11. They are willing to be ruled, but not to be ridden; protection draws allegiance, but destruction cannot. No marvel *Israel falls away from the house of David*, ver. 19. If the house of David fall away from the great ends of their advancement, which was to be *ministers of God to them for good*. But thus to rebel against the seed of David, whom God had advanced to the kingdom, and entailed it on his seed, and to set up another king in opposition to that family, was a great sin, see 2 Chron. xiii. 5—8. To this God refers, *Hos. viii. 4. They have set up kings, but not by me*. And it is here mentioned to the praise of the tribe of Judah, that they followed the house of David, ver. 17—20. and for ought appears, they found Rehoboam better than his word, nor did he rule with the rigour which at first he threatened.

2. Rehoboam was imprudent in the farther management of this affair, and more and more infatuated. Having foolishly thrown himself into a quicksand, he sunk the farther in with plunging to get out. (1.) He was very unadvised in sending Adoram, who was *over the tribute*, to treat with them, ver. 18. The tribute was the thing, and for the sake of that Adoram was the person they most complained of; the very sight of him, whose name was odious among them, exasperated them, and made them outrageous: He was one whom they could not so much as give a patient hearing to, but *stoned him to death* in a popular tumult. Rehoboam was now as unhappy in the choice of his ambassador, as before of his counsellors. (2.) Some think he was also unadvised in quitting his ground, and making so much haste to Jerusalem, for thereby he deserted his friends, and gave advantage to his enemies, who went to their tents indeed, ver. 16. in disgust, but did not offer to make Jeroboam king till Rehoboam was gone, ver. 20. See how soon this foolish prince went from one extreme to the other. He hectorated and talked big, when he thought all was his own, but sneaked and looked very mean when he saw himself in some danger. It is common for those that are most haughty in their prosperity, to be most abject in adversity.

3. God forbid his attempt to recover what he had lost by the sword. What was done was of God, who would not suffer, 1. That it should be undone again, as it would be, if Rehoboam got the better, and reduced the ten tribes. Nor, 2. That more should be done to the prejudice of the house of David, as would be, if Jeroboam should get the better and conquer the two tribes. The thing must rest as it is, and therefore God forbids the battle.

(1.) It was brave enough in Rehoboam, to design the reducing of the revolted by force. His courage came to him, when he was come to Jerusalem, ver. 21. There he thought himself among his friends, who generously adhered to him, and appeared for him. Judah and Benjamin (who feared the Lord and the king, and meddled not with them that were given to change,) presently raised an army of an hundred and eighty thousand men, for the recovery of their king's right to the ten tribes, and were resolved to stand by him (as we say) with their lives and fortunes; having either not such cause, or rather not such a disposition, to complain, as the rest had. (2.) It was more brave in Rehoboam to desert, when God by a prophet ordered him to lay down his arms. He would not lose a kingdom tamely, for then he had been unworthy the title of a prince; and yet he would not contend for it in opposition to God, for then he had been unworthy the title of an Israelite. To proceed in this war, would be not only to fight against their brethren, ver. 24. whom they ought to love; but to fight against their God, whom they ought to submit to; *this thing is from me*. These two considerations should reconcile us to our losses and troubles, that God is the author of them, and our brethren are the instruments of them; let us not therefore immediately revenge. Rehoboam, and his people, *hearkened to the word of the Lord*, disbanded the army, and acquiesced. Though in human probability they had a fair prospect of success; for their army was numerous and resolute, Jeroboam's party weak and unsettled: Though it would turn to their reproach among their neighbours to lose so much of their strength, and never have a push for it, to make a flourish and do nothing, yet, 1. They regarded the command of God, though sent by a poor prophet. When we know God's mind, we must submit to it, how much soever it crosseth our own mind. 2. They consulted their own interest; concluding, that though they had all the advantages, even that of right, on their side, yet they could not prosper if they fought in disobedience to God: and it was better sit still, than rise up and fall. In the next reign, God allowed them to fight, and gave them victory, 2 Chron. xxiii. but not now.

25. ¶ Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein, and went out from thence, and built Peniel. 26. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: 27. If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. 28. Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 29. And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan. 30. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. 31. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. 32. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar (so did he in Bethel) sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made. 33. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Beth-el, the fifteenth day of

the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart: and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel, and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

We have here the beginning of the reign of Jeroboam: He built Shechem first, and then Peniel, beautified and fortified them, and probably had a palace in each of them for himself, ver. 25. the former in Ephraim, the latter in Gad, on the other side Jordan. This was well enough; but he formed another project for the establishing of his kingdom, which was fatal to the interests of religion in it.

1. That which he designed, was by some effectual means to secure those to himself, who had now chosen him their king, and prevent their return to the house of David, ver. 26, 27. It seems, 1. He was jealous of the people, afraid that some time or other they would kill him, and go again to Rehoboam. Many that have been advanced in one tumult, have been kicked off in another. Jeroboam could not put any confidence in the affections of his people, though now they seemed extreme fond of him; for what is got by wrong and usurpation, cannot be enjoyed or kept with any security or satisfaction. 2. He was distrustful of the promise of God; could not take his word, that if he would keep close to his duty, *God would build him a sure house*, chap. xi. 38. but he would contrive ways and means, and sinful ones too, for his own safety. A practical disbelief of God's all-sufficiency, is at the bottom of all our treacherous departures from him.

2. The way he took to do this, was by keeping the people from going up to Jerusalem to worship. This was the place God had chosen to put his name there; Solomon's temple was there, which God had, in the sight of all Israel, and in the memory of many now living, taken possession of in a cloud of glory. At the altar, there the priests of the Lord attended, there all Israel were to keep the feasts, and thither they were to bring their sacrifices.

Now (1.) Jeroboam apprehended, that if the people continued to do this, they would in time return to the house of David, allured by the magnificence both of the court, and of the temple. If they cleave to their old religion, they will go back to their old king. We may suppose, if he had treated with Rehoboam for the safe-conduct of himself and his people to and from Jerusalem, at the times appointed for their solemn feasts, it would not have been denied him: therefore he fears not their being driven back by force, but their going back to Rehoboam.

(2.) He therefore dissuaded them from going up to Jerusalem, pretending to consult their ease, *it is too much for you to go so far to worship God*, ver. 28. it is a heavy yoke, and it is time to shake it off, *you have gone long enough to Jerusalem*. So some read it; the temple, now you are used to it, doth not appear so glorious and sacred as it did at first: sensible glories wither by degrees in men's estimation. You have freed yourselves from other burdens, free yourselves from this: why should we now be tied to one place any more than in Samuel's time?

(3.) He provided for the assistance of their devotion at home. Upon consultation had with some of his politicians, he came to this resolve, To set up two golden calves, as tokens or signs of the divine presence; and persuade the people they had as good stay at home, and offer sacrifice to those, as go to Jerusalem and worship before the ark; and some are so charitable as to think, they were made to represent the mercy-seat, and the cherubims over the ark: But more probably he learnt it of the Egyptians, in whose land he had sojourned for some time, and who worshipped their god Apis, under the similitude of a bull or calf. 1. He would not be at the charge of building a golden temple, as Solomon had done: two golden calves is the most he can afford. 2. He intended no doubt by these to represent, or rather presentiate, not any false god, as Moloch or Chemoth, but the true God only, the God of Israel, the God that brought them up out of the land of Egypt, as he declares, ver. 28. So that it was no violation of the first commandment, but the second. And he chose thus to engage the people's devotion, because he knew there were many among them so in love with images, that for the sake of the calves they would willingly quit God's temple, where all images were forbidden. 3. He set up two, by degrees to break people off from the belief of the unity of the godhead, which would pave the way to the polytheism of the Pagans. He set up these two at Dan and Beth-el, one the utmost border of his country northward, the other southwards, as if they were the guardians and protectors of the kingdom. Beth-el lay close to Judah: he set up one there to tempt those of Rehoboam's subjects over him, who were inclined to image-worship, in lieu of those his subjects, that would continue to go to Jerusalem. He set the other at Dan, for the convenience of those that lay most remote, and because Micah's images had been set up there, and great veneration paid to them for many ages, *Judg. xviii. 30*. Beth-el signifies the house of God, which gave some colour to the superstition, but the prophet called it Beth-aven, the house of vanity, or iniquity.

(4.) The people complied with him herein, and were fond enough of the novelty they went to worship before the one even unto Dan, ver. 30. to that at Dan first, because it was first set up; or even to that at Dan, though it lay such a great way off. They that thought it much to go to Jerusalem to worship God according to his own institution, make no difficulty of going twice as far as Dan, to worship him according to their own inventions. Or, they are said to go to one of the calves at Dan, because Ahijah, king of Judah, within twenty years recovered Beth-el, 2 Chron. xiii. 19. and, it is likely, removed the golden calf, or forbade the use of it, and then they had only that at Dan to go to. This became a sin; and a great sin it was, against the express letter of the second commandment: God had sometimes dispensed with the law concerning worshipping in one place, but never allowed the worship of him by images. Hereby they justified their fathers in making the calf at Horeb, though God had so fully shewn his displeasure against them for it, and threatened to visit for it in the day of visitation, *Exod. xxxiii. 34*. So that it was as great a contempt of God's wrath, as it was of his law: and thus they added sin to sin. Bishop Patrick quotes a saying of the Jews, That till Jeroboam's time the Israelites sucked but one calf, but from that time they sucked two.

(5.) Having set up the gods, he fitted up accommodations for them; wherein he varied from the divine appointment, we are here told; which intimates, that in other things he imitated what was done in Judah, ver. 32. as well as he could. See how one error multiplied into many.

1. He made a house of high places or of altars; one temple at Dan, we may suppose, and another at Beth-el, ver. 31. and in each many altars, probably complaining of it as an inconvenience, that in the temple at Jerusalem there was but one. The multiplying of the altars passed with some for a piece of devotion, but God by the prophets puts another construction upon it, *Hos. viii. 11. Ephraim has made many altars to sin*.

2. He made priests of the lowest of the people; and the lowest of the people were good enough to be priests to his calves, and too good. He made priests from the extreme parts of the people, i. e. some out of every corner of the country, whom he ordered to reside among their neighbours, to instruct them in his appointments, and reconcile them to him: Thus were

were they dispersed as the Levites, but were not of the sons of Levi. But the priests of the high places or altars, he ordered to reside in Beth-el, as the priests in Jerusalem, *ver.* 32. to attend the public service.

3. The feast of tabernacles, which God had appointed on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, he adjourned to the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *ver.* 32. *The month which he devised of his own heart,* to shew his powers in ecclesiastical matters, *ver.* 33. The passover and pentecost he observed in their proper seasons, or did not observe them at all, or with little solemnity in comparison with this.

4. He himself assuming a power to make priests, no marvel if he undertook to do the priest's work with his own hands, *He offered upon the altar,* *ver.* 32. and twice it is mentioned, *ver.* 33. as also that he burnt incense. This was connived at in him, because it was of a piece with the rest of his irregularities; but in king Uzziah it was immediately punished with the plague of leprosy. He did it himself, to make him look great among the people, and to get the reputation of a devout man; also to grace the solemnity of this new festival, with which it is likely, at this time, he joined the feast of the dedication of his altar.

And thus, 1. Jeroboam sinned himself; yet perhaps excused himself to the world and his own conscience, with this, that he did not do so ill as Solomon did, who worshipped other gods. 2. He made Israel to sin, drew them off the worship of God, and entailed idolatry upon their seed. And hereby they were punished for deserting the thrones of the house of David.

The learned Mr. Whiston, in his chronology for the adjusting of the annals of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, supposeth that Jeroboam changed the calculation of the year, and made it to contain but eleven months, and that by those years the reigns of the kings of Israel are measured till Jehu's revolution, and no longer; in which interval, eleven years of the annals of Judah answer to twelve in those of Israel.

C H A P. XIII.

In the close of the foregoing chapter; we left Jeroboam attending his altar at Beth-el, and there we find him in the beginning of this, when he received a testimony from God against his idolatry and apostasy: This was sent him by a prophet, a man of God that lived in Judah, who is the principal subject of the story of this chapter, where we are told, 1. What passed between him and the new king. (1.) The prophet threatened Jeroboam's altar, *ver.* 1, 2. and gave him a sign, *ver.* 3. which immediately came to pass, *ver.* 5. (2.) The king threatened the prophet, and was himself made another sign, by the withering of his hand, *ver.* 4. and the restoring of it upon his submission, and the prophet's intercession, *ver.* 6. (3.) The prophet refused the kindnesses offered him thereupon, *ver.* 7—10. 2. What passed between him and the old prophet. (1.) The old prophet fetched him back by a lie, and gave him entertainment, *ver.* 11—19. (2.) He, for accepting it in disobedience to the divine command, is threatened with death, *ver.* 20, 21, 22. And, 3. threatening is executed, for he is slain by a lion, *ver.* 23, 24. and buried at Beth-el, *ver.* 25—32. 4. Jeroboam is hardened in his idolatry, *ver.* 33, 34. Thy judgments, Lord, are a great deep.

1. **A**ND, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah, by the word of the LORD unto Beth-el: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. 2. And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD, Behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee. 3. And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the LORD hath spoken: Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out. 4. And it came to pass when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God which had cried against the altar in Beth-el, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. 5. The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. 6. And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought the LORD, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before. 7. And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward. 8. And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread, nor drink water in this place: 9. For it was so charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. 10. So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Beth-el.

Here is, 1. A messenger sent to Jeroboam, to signify to him God's displeasure against his idolatry, *ver.* 1. The army of Judah that aimed to ruin him was countermanded, and might not draw a sword against him, *chap.* xii. 24. but a prophet of Judah is instead thereof sent to reclaim him from his evil way, and is sent in time, while he is but dedicating his altar, before his heart is hardened by the deceitfulness of his sin, for God delights not in sinners death, but would rather they would turn and live. How bold was the messenger, that durst attack the king in his pride, and interrupt the solemnity he was proud of? They that go on God's errand, must not fear the face of man; they know who will bear them out. How kind was he

that sent him to warn Jeroboam of the wrath of God revealed from heaven against his ungodliness and unrighteousness.

2. The message delivered in God's name, not whispered, but cried with a loud voice, noting both the prophet's courage, that he was neither afraid nor ashamed to own it; and his earnestness, that he desired to be heard and heeded by all that were present, who were not a few, on this great occasion. It is directed not to Jeroboam, or to the people, but to the altar, the stones of which will sooner hear and yield, than they who were mad upon their idols, and deaf to divine calls. Yet in threatening the altar, he threatens the founder and worshippers, to whom it is as dear as their own souls; and who might conclude, If God's wrath falls upon the lifeless guiltless altar, how shall we escape? That which is foretold concerning the altar, (*ver.* 2.) is, that in process of time a prince of the house of David, Josiah by name, should pollute this altar by sacrificing the idolatrous priests themselves upon it, and burning the bones of dead men. Let Jeroboam know and be sure, (1.) That the altar he now consecrated should be defecrated. Idolatrous worship will not continue, but the word of the Lord will endure for ever. (2.) That the priests of the high places he now made, should themselves be made sacrifices to the justice of God, and the first and only sacrifices upon this altar that would be pleasing to him. If the offering he such as is an abomination to God, it will follow of course, that the offerers must themselves fall under his wrath, which will abide upon them, since it is not otherwise transmitted. (3.) That this should be done by a branch of the house of David. That family which he and his kingdom had despised, and treacherously deserted, should recover so much power as to demolish that altar which he thought to establish; so that right and truth should at length prevail both in civil and sacred matters, notwithstanding the present triumphs of those that were given to change the fear both of God and the king. It was about three hundred and fifty-six years ere this prediction was fulfilled, yet it was spoken of as sure and nigh at hand; for a thousand years with God are but as one day. Nothing more contingent and arbitrary than the giving of names to persons, yet Josiah is here named above three hundred years before he was born. Nothing future is hid from God. There are names in the book of the divine prescience, *Phil.* iv. 3. names written in heaven.

3. A sign is given for the confirming of the truth of this prediction, that the altar should be shaken to pieces by an invisible power, and the ashes of the sacrifice scattered, *ver.* 3. which came to pass immediately, *ver.* 5. which was, (1.) A proof that the prophet was sent of God, confirmed the word with this sign following, *Mark* xvi. 20. (2.) A present indication of God's displeasure against these idolatrous sacrifices. How could the gift be acceptable, when the altar that should sanctify it was an abomination: (3.) It was a reproach to the people, whose hearts were harder than these stones, and rent not under the word of the Lord. (4.) It was a specimen of what should be done to it in the accomplishment of this prophecy by Josiah; it was now rent in token of its being then ruined.

4. Jeroboam's hand withered which he stretched out to seize or smite the man of God, *ver.* 4. Instead of trembling at the message, as he might have done, he fell foul on him that brought it, in defiance of the wrath of which he was warned, and contempt of that grace which sent him the warning. Rebuke a sinner and he will hate thee, and do thee a mischief if he can, yet God's prophets must rather expose themselves than betray their trust; he that employs them will protect them, and restrain the wrath of man, as he did Jeroboam's here, by withering his hand, so that he could neither hurt the prophet nor draw it in to help himself. When his hand was stretched out to burn incense to his calves, it was not withered; but when it was stretched out against a prophet, he shall have no use of it till he humble himself. Of all the wickedness of the wicked, there was none more provoking to God than the malicious attempts against the prophets, of whom he hath said, *Touch them not, do them no harm.* As this was a punishment of Jeroboam, and answering the sin, so it was the deliverance of the prophet. God has many ways of disabling the enemies of his church to execute their mischievous purposes. Jeroboam's inability to pull in his hand, made him a spectacle to all about him, that they might see and fear. If God in justice harden the hearts of sinners, so that the hand they have stretched out in sin they cannot pull in again by repentance, that is a spiritual judgment, represented by this here, and much more dreadful.

5. The sudden healing of the hand that was suddenly dried up, upon his submission, *ver.* 6. That word of God which should have touched his conscience, humbled him not, but this which touched his bone and his flesh brings down his proud spirit. He looks for help now, (1.) Not from his calves, but from God only, from his power, and his favour: He wounded, and no hand but his can make whole. (2.) Not by his own sacrifice and incense, but by the prayer and intercession of the prophet, whom he had just now threatened, and aimed to be the death of. The time may come, when those that hate the preaching, would be glad of the prayers of faithful ministers. Pray to the Lord thy God, saith Jeroboam, thou hast an interest in him, improve it for me. But observe, he doth not desire him to pray that his sin might not be pardoned, and his heart changed, only that his hand might be restored; Thus Pharaoh would have Moses to pray that God would take away this death only, *Exod.* x. 17. not the sin. The prophet, as became a man of God, renders good for evil, upbraids not Jeroboam with his impotent malice, nor triumphs in his submission, but immediately addressed himself to God for him. Those only are entitled to the blessing Christ pronounced on the persecuted, that learn of him to pray for their persecutors, *Matt.* v. 10, 44. When the prophet thus honoured God, by shewing himself of a forgiving spirit, God put this farther honour upon him, that at his word he recalled the judgment, and by another miracle healed the withered hand; that by the goodness of God Jeroboam might be led to repentance, and if he were not broken by the judgment, yet might be melted by the mercy. With both he seemed affected for the present, but the impression wore off.

6. The prophet's refusal of Jeroboam's kind invitation: In which observe, (1.) That God forbid his messenger to eat or drink in Beth-el; *ver.* 9. to shew his detestation of their execrable idolatry and apostasy from God, and to teach us not to have fellowship with the works of darkness, lest we have infection from them, or give encouragement to them. He must not turn back the same way, but deliver his message as it were in transitu: He shall not seem to be sent on purpose, they were unworthy such a favour, but as if only called by the way, his spirit being stirred like Paul's at Athens, as he passed and saw their devotions. God would by his command try his prophet, as he did Ezekiel, whether he would not be rebellious like that rebellious house, *Ezek.* ii. 8. (2.) That Jeroboam was so affected with the cure of his hand, that though we read not of his thanksgivings to God for the mercy, or his sending an offering to the altar of Jerusalem in acknowledgment of it, yet he was willing to express his gratitude to the prophet, and pay him for his prayers, *ver.* 7. Favours to the body will make even graceless men seem grateful to good ministers. (3.) That the prophet, though hungry and weary, and perhaps poor, in obedience to the divine command, refused both the entertainment, and the reward proffered him. He might think his acceptance of it would give him an opportunity of dis-

courting farther with the king, in order to his effectual reformation now he was convinced, yet he will not think himself wiser than God, but like a faithful careful messenger returns home when he has done his errand. They have little learned the lesson of self-denial, that cannot forbear one forbidden meal.

11. ¶ Now there dwelt an old prophet in Beth-el, and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Beth-el: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father. 12. And their father said unto them, What way went he? For his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah. 13. And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the as. So they saddled him the as, and he rode thereon. 14. And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak; and he said unto him, *Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah?* And he said, *I am.* 15. Then he said unto him, Come home with me; and eat bread. 16. And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread, nor drink water with thee in this place. 17. For it was said to me by the word of the LORD, Thou shalt eat no bread, nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest. 18. He said unto him, *I am a prophet also as thou art,* and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee unto thy house, that he may eat bread, and drink water. *But* he lied unto him. 19. So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water. 20. ¶ And it came to pass as they sat at the table that the word of the LORD came unto the prophet that brought him back: 21. And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee, 22. But camest back, and has eaten bread, and drunk water in the place of which the LORD did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers.

The man of God had honestly and bravely refused the king's invitation, though he promised him a reward, yet was over persuaded by an old prophet, to come back with him and dine in Beth-el, contrary to the command given him: But here we find how dear his dinner cost him. Observe with wonder,

1. The old prophet's wickedness. I cannot but call him a false prophet, and an ill man, being much easier to believe, than from one of such a bad character, should be extorted a confirmation of what the man of God said, as we find, *ver.* 32. than that a true prophet, and a good man, should tell such a deliberate lie, as here he did and farther it upon God: *A good tree could never bring forth such corrupt fruit.*—Perhaps he was trained up, among the sons of the prophets, in one of Samuel's colleges not far off, whence he retained the name of a prophet, but growing worldly and profane, the spirit of prophecy was departed from him. If he had been a good prophet, he would have reprov'd Jeroboam's idolatry, and not have suffered his sons to attend his altars, as it should seem they did.

Now, (1.) Whether he had any good design in fetching back the man of God is not certain. One may hope he did it in compassion to him, concluding he wanted refreshment, and out of a desire to be better acquainted with him, and more fully to understand his errand, than he could from the report of his sons; yet his sons having told him all that passed, and particularly that the prophet was forbid to eat or drink there, which he had openly told Jeroboam; I suppose it was done with an ill design, to draw him into a snare, and so expose him, for false prophets have ever been the worst enemies to the true prophets, usually aiming to destroy them, but sometimes, as here, to debauch them, and draw them from their duty: Thus they gave the Nazarites wine to drink, Amos ii. 12. that they might glory in their fall.

But, (2.) It is certain he took a very ill method to bring him back. When the man of God had told him, I may not, and therefore I will not return to eat bread with thee, his resolutions concurring with the divine command, *ver.* 16, 17. he wickedly pretended that he had an order from heaven to fetch him back; he trumped upon his *quidam* character as a prophet. *I am a prophet also as thou art;* pretended that he had a vision of an angel that sent him on this errand, but it was a lie, it was a banter upon prophecy, and prophane in the highest degree. When this old prophet is spoken of, 2 Kings xxiii. 18 he is called the prophet that came out of Samaria, whereas there was no such place as Samaria till long after, *chap.* xvii. 24. therefore I take it he is so called there, though he was of Beth-el, because he was like those who were afterwards the prophets of Samaria, who caused God's people Israel to err, Jer. xxiii. 13.

2. The good prophet's weakness, in suffering himself to be imposed upon by this sham; *He went back with him,* *ver.* 19. he that had resolution enough to refuse the invitation of the king, who promised him a reward, could not resist the insinuations of one that pretended to be a prophet; good people are more in danger of being drawn from their duty, by the plausible pretences of divinity and sanctity than by external inducements; we have therefore need to beware of false prophets, and not believe every spirit.

3. The proceedings of divine justice hereupon; and here we may well wonder, both that the wicked prophet, who told the lie, and did mischief, went unpunished; while the holy man of God, that was drawn by him into sin, was suddenly and severely punished for it; what shall we make of this! the judgments of God are unfathomable; the deceived, and the deceiver are his, and he giveth not account of any of his matters; certainly there must be a judgment to come, when these things will be called over again, and when those that sinned most, and suffered least in this world, will receive according to their works. 1. The message delivered to the man of God was strange, his crime is recited, *ver.* 21, 22. it was, in one word, disobedience to an express command, judgment is given upon it, *Thy carcase shall not come to the sepulchre of thy fathers,* i. e. Thou shalt never reach thy own house, but shalt be a carcase quickly, nor shall thy dead body be

brought to the place of thy fathers' sepulchres, to be interred. 2. Yet it was more strange, that the old prophet himself should be the messenger: of this we can give no account, but that God would have it so, as he spake to Balaam by his ass, and read Saul his doom by the devil in Samuel's likeness; we may think God designed hereby, (1.) To startle the lying prophet, and make him sensible of his sin, the message could not but affect him the more, when he himself had the delivering of it, and had so strong an impression made upon his spirit by it, that he cried out as one in an agony, *ver.* 21. he had reason to think, if he must die for his disobedience in a small matter, who sinned by surprise, of how much more punishment he should be thought worthy, who had belied an angel of God, and cheated a man of God by a deliberate forgery. *If this were done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?* Perhaps it had a good effect upon him; those who preach God's wrath to others have hard hearts indeed, if they fear it not themselves.—2. To put the greater mortification upon the prophet that was deceived, and to shew what they must expect who hearken to the great deceiver; they that yield to him as a tempter, will be terrified by him as a tormentor, whom he now saws upon, he will afterwards fly upon, and whom he draws into sin, he will do what he can to drive to despair.

23. ¶ And it came to pass after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the as, to wit, for the prophet whom he had brought back. 24. And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcase was cast in the way, and the as stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcase. 25. And, behold, men passed by, and saw the carcase cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcase: and they came and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt. 26. And when the prophet that brought him back from the way, heard thereof, he said, It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the LORD: therefore the LORD hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him and slain him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake unto him. 27. And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the as. And they saddled him. 28. And he went and found his carcase cast in the way, and the as and the lion, standing by the carcase: the lion had not eaten the carcase, nor torn the as. 29. And the prophet took up the carcase of the man of God, and laid it upon the as, and brought it back: and the old prophet came to the city, to mourn, and to bury him. 30. And he laid his carcase in his own grave, and they mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother. 31. And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried, and lay my bones beside his bones. 32. For the saying which he cried by the word of the LORD against the altar in Beth-el, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass. 33. ¶ After this thing, Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high-places: who-soever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. 34. And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and destroy it from off the face of the earth.

Here is, 1. The death of the deceived disobedient prophet. The old prophet that had deluded him, as if he would make him some amends for the wrong he had done him, or help to prevent the mischief threatened him, furnished him with an as to ride home on, but by the way a lion set upon him and killed him, *ver.* 23, 24. he did but turn back to refresh himself when he was an hungry, and behold he must die for it, to allude to that of Jonathan, 1 Sam. xiv. 43. But we must consider, (1.) That his offence was great, and it would by no means justify him, that he was drawn into it by a lie; he could not be so certain of the countermand sent by another, as he was of the command given to himself, nor had he any ground to think that the command should be recalled when the reason of it remained in force, which was, that he might testify his detestation of the wickedness of that place.—He had great reason to suspect the honesty of this old prophet, who did not himself bear his testimony, nor did God think fit to make use of him as a witness against the idolatry of the city he lived in; however, he should have taken time to beg direction from God, and not have complied, so soon: Did he think this old prophet's house safer to eat in than in any other house at Beth-el, when God had forbidden him to eat in any? That was to refuse upon the command, and make himself wiser than God. Did he think to excuse himself, that he was hungry, had he never read, that *man lives not by bread alone?* (2.) That his death was for the glory of God, for by this it appeared, (1.) That nothing is more provoking to him than disobedience to an express command, though in a small matter, which makes his proceedings against our first parents for eating forbidden fruit the more accountable. (2.) That God is displeased at the sins of his own people, and no man shall be protected in disobedience by the sanctity of his profession, the dignity of his office, the nearness to God, or any good services he has done for him. Perhaps God by this intended, in a way of righteous judgment, to harden Jeroboam's heart, since it was not reformed by the withering of his hand, for he would be apt to make an ill use of it, and to say, the prophet was well enough served for meddling with this altar, he had better have stayed at home; nay, he would say, providence had punished him for his insolence, and the lion had done that which his withered hand might not do; however, by this he intended to warn all those whom he employs strictly to observe their orders at their peril.

2. The wonderful preservation of his dead body, which was a token of God's mercy remembered in the midst of his wrath; the lion that gently strangled him or tore him, did not devour his dead body, nor so much as tear the as, *ver.* 24, 25. nay, what was more, he did not set upon the travellers that passed by and saw it, nor upon the old prophet (who had reason enough to fear it) when he came to take up the corpse; his commission

kill the prophet, hitherto he should go, but no further; thus God shewed, that though he was angry with him, his anger was turned away, and the punishment went no further than death.

3. The care which the old prophet took of his burial; when he heard of the unusual accident, he concluded it was the man of God who was disobedient to his master, (and whose fault was that?) Therefore the Lord has delivered him to the lion, ver. 26. It had well become him to have asked why the lion was not sent against him and his house, rather than against the good man whom he had cheated. He took up the corps, ver. 29. If there were any truth in the vulgar opinion, sure the corps bled afresh when he touched it, for he was in effect the murderer, as it was but a poor reparation for the injury, to inter the dead body; perhaps when he cheated him into his ruin, he intended to laugh at him, yet his conscience so far relents that he weeps over him, and, like Joab at Abner's funeral, is compelled to be a mourner for him whom he had been the death of; they said, *Alas, my brother*, ver. 30. The case was indeed very piteous, that to good a man, so faithful a prophet, and so bold in God's cause, should for one offence die as a criminal; while an old lying prophet lives at ease, and an idolatrous prince in pomp and power: *Thy way, O God, is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters*. We cannot judge of men by their sufferings, nor of sins by their present punishments; with some the flesh is destroyed that the spirit may be saved, while with others the flesh is pampered, that the soul may ripen for hell.

4. The charge which the old prophet gave his sons concerning his own burial, that they should be care to bury him in the same grave where the man of God was buried, ver. 31. *Lay my bones beside his bones*, close by them as near as may be, so that my dust may mingle with his; though he was a lying prophet, yet he desired to die the death of a true prophet; gather not my soul with the sinners of Beth-el, but with this man of God, —The reason he gives, is, because what he cried against the altar of Beth-el, that men's bones should be burnt upon it, shall surely come to pass, ver. 32. Thus, 1. He ratifies the prediction, that out of the mouth of two witnesses, (and one of them such a one as St. Paul quotes, *Titus* i. 12. *one of themselves, even a prophet of their own*) the word might be established, if possible to convince and reclaim Jeroboam. 2. He doth honour to the deceased prophet, as one whose word would not fall to the ground, though he died; ministers die, die untimely it may be, but the word of the Lord endures for ever, and doth not die with them. 3. He consults his own interest, it was foretold that men's bones should be burnt upon Jeroboam's altar, lay mine (saith he) close to his, and then they will not be disturbed; and it was accordingly their security, as we find, *2 Kings* xxxiii. 18. Sleeping and waking, living and dying, it is safe being in good company. —No mention is made here of the inscription on the prophet's tomb, but it is spoken of, *2 Kings* xxiii. 17. where Jeroboam asks, *What title is that?* and is told, *It is the sepulchre of the man of God, that came from Judah, who proclaimed these things which thou hast done*; so that the epitaph upon the prophet's grave preserved the remembrance of his prophecy, and was a standing testimony against the idolatries of Beth-el, which it would not have been so remarkable, if he had died and been buried elsewhere; the cities of Israel are here called cities of Samaria, though that name was not yet known; for however the old prophet spoke, the inspired historian wrote in the language of his own times.

5. The obstinacy of Jeroboam in his idolatry, ver. 33. he returned not from his evil way; some have found that durst repair the altar God had rent, and then Jeroboam offered sacrifice on it again, and the more boldly, because the prophet, who disturbed him before, was in his grave, (*Rev.* xi. 10.) and because the prophecy was for a great while to come. —Various methods had been used to reclaim him, but neither threats nor signs, neither judgments nor mercies, wrought upon him, so strangely was he wedded to his calves; he did not reform, no not his priesthood, but whoever would he filled his hand, and made him priest, though never so illiterate or immoral, and of what tribe soever, and this became sin, i. e. a snare first, and then a ruin to Jeroboam's house, cut it off, ver. 34. Note, The diminution, disquiet and delation of families, is the fruit of sin: he promised himself that the calves would secure the crown to his family; but it proved they lost it and sunk his family: Those betray themselves that think by any sin to support themselves.

C H A P. XIV.

The kingdom being divided into that of Judah and that of Israel, we must henceforward in these books of kings expect and attend their separate history, the succession of their kings, and the affairs of their kingdoms accounted for distinctly. In this chapter we have, (1.) The prophecy of the destruction of Jeroboam's house, ver. 7—16. The sickness of his child was the occasion of it, ver. 1—6. and the death of his child the earnest of it, ver. 17—18. together with the conclusion of his reign, ver. 19, 20. (2.) The history of the declension and diminution of Rehoboam's house and his kingdom, ver. 21—28. and the conclusion of his reign, ver. 29—31. In both which we may read the mischievous consequences of sin, and the calamities it brings on kingdoms and families.

1. **A**T that time Ahijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick. 2. And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam: and get thee to Shiloh; behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, which told me that I should be king over this people. 3. And take with thee ten loaves and cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him: he shall tell thee what shall become of the child. 4. And Jeroboam's wife did so and arose, and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah; but Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were set by reason of his age. 5. ¶ And the LORD said unto Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son, for he is sick: thus and thus shalt thou say unto her, for it shall be when she cometh in, that she shall feign herself to be another woman. 6. And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam, why feignest thou thyself to be another, for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings.

No. LIII.*

How Jeroboam persisted in his contempt of God and religion we read in the close of the foregoing chapter, now here we are told how God proceeded in his controversy with him, for when God judgeth he will overcome, and sinners shall either bend or break before him.

1. His child fell sick, ver. 1. It is probable he was his eldest son, and heir apparent to the crown, for at his death all the kingdom went into mourning for him, ver. 13. —Neither his dignity as a prince, nor his age as a young prince, nor his interest in heaven as a pious prince, could exempt him from sickness, dangerous sickness; let none be secure of the continuance of their health, but improve it while it continues for the best purposes: Lord, behold he whom thou lovest, thy favourite, he whom Israel loves, their darling, is sick; at that time when Jeroboam prostituted and profaned the priesthood, chap. xiii. 31. his child sickened; when sickness comes into our families, we should enquire whether there be not some particular sin harboured in our houses, which the affliction is sent to convince us of and reclaim us from.

2. He sent his wife in disguise to enquire of Ahijah the prophet, what should become of the child, ver. 2, 3. the sickness of his child touched him in a tender part, the withering of this branch of the family, would perhaps be as sore an affliction to him as the withering of that branch of his body, chap. xiii. 4. such is the force of natural affection; our children are ourselves but once removed.

Now, (1.) Jeroboam's great desire under this affliction is to know what shall become of the child, whether he will live or die. 1. It had been more prudent, if he had desired to know what means they should use for the recovery of the child, what they should give him, and what they should do to him; but by this instance, and that of Ahaziah, *2 Kings* i. 2. and Benhadad, *2 Kings* viii. 3. it should seem, they had then a foolish notion of fatality, as took them off from all use of means, for if they were sure the patient would live, they thought means needless; if he would die, they thought them useless, not considering that duty is ours, events are God's, and that he that ordained the end ordained the means; why should a prophet be desired to shew that which a little time will shew? 2. It had been more pious, if he had desired to know wherefore God contended with him, had begged the prophet's prayers, and cast away his idols from him, then the child might have been restored to him, as his hand was; but most people would be rather told their fortune than told their faults or their duty.

(2.) That he might know the child's doom, he sent to Ahijah the prophet, who lived obscure and neglected in Shiloh, blind for age, yet still blessed with the visions of the Almighty; which need not badly eyes, but are rather favoured by the want of them, the eyes of the mind being then most intent and least diverted. —Jeroboam sent not to him for advice about the setting up of his calves, or the consecrating of his priests, but has recourse to him in his distress, when the gods he served could give him no relief; Lord, in trouble they have visited thee, who before slighted thee; some have by sickness been minded of their forgotten ministers and praying friends; he sends Ahijah, because he had told him he should be king, ver. 2. He was once the messenger of good tidings, sure he will be so again; those that by sin unqualify themselves for comfort, and yet expect their ministers, because they are good men, should speak peace and comfort to them, greatly wrong both themselves and their ministers.

(3.) He sent his wife to enquire of the prophet, because she could best put the question without naming names, or making any other description but this, Sir, I have a son ill, will he recover or not? The heart of her husband safely trusted in her, that she would be faithful both in delivering the message, and bringing him the answer; and it seems, there were none of all his counsellors in whom he could repose such a confidence, otherwise the sick child could very ill have spared her, for mothers are the best nurses, and it had been much fitter for her to have stayed at home to tend him, than to go to Shiloh to enquire what would become of him. —In the go, 1. She must go incognito, must disguise herself, change her dress, cover her face, and go by another name, not only to conceal herself from her own court and the country through which she past, as it were below her quality to go upon such an errand, and what she had reason to be ashamed of, as Nicodemus that came to Jesus by night, whereas it is no disparagement to the greatest to attend to God's prophets; but also to conceal herself from the prophet himself, that he might only answer her question concerning her son, and not enter into the unpleasant subject of her husband's defection: thus some people love to preterbute to their ministers, limit them to smooth things, and care not for having the whole counsel of God declared to them, lest it prove to prophesy no good concerning them, but evil: But what a strange notion had Jeroboam of God's prophets, that he be reverent he could and would certainly tell what would become of the child, and yet either could not or would not discover who was the mother; could he see into the thick darkness of futurity, and yet not see through the thin veil of this disguise? Did he think the God of Israel like his calves, just what he pleaded? Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

3. God gave Ahijah notice of the approach of Jeroboam's wife, and that she came in disguise, and full instructions what to say to her, ver. 5: which enabled him as she came in at the door to call her by her name, to her great surprise, and so to discover to all about him who she was, ver. 6. Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam, why feignest thou thyself to be another? He had no regard either, 1. To her rank; she was a queen, but what was that to him, who had a message to deliver her immediately from God, before whom all the children of men stand upon the same level. Nor, 2. To her present; it was usual for those who consulted prophets, to bring them tokens of respect, which they accepted, and yet were no hiring; she brought him a handsome country present, ver. 4. but he did not think himself obliged by that to give her any finer language than the nature of her message required. Nor, 3. To her industrious concealment of herself; it is a piece of civility, not to take notice of those who desire not to be taken notice of, but the prophet was no courtier, nor gave flattering titles; plain dealing is best, and she shall know at the first word what she has to trust to, I am sent to thee with heavy tidings. Note, Those who think by their disguises to hide themselves from God, will be wretchedly confounded, when they find themselves disappointed in the day of discovery; sinners now appear in the garb of saints, and are taken to be so, but how will they blush and tremble, when they find themselves stripped of their false colours, and are called by their own name; go out thou treacherous false-hearted hypocrite, I never knew thee, why feignest thou thyself to be another? Tidings of a portion with hypocrites will be heavy tidings; God will judge men according to what they are, not according to what they seem.

7. Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee a prince over my people Israel, 8. And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee; and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who

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followed

followed me with all his heart, to do *that only which was right in mine eyes*. 9. But hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back. 10. Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung till it be all gone. 11. Him that dieth of Jeroboam in the city, shall the dogs eat: and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat: for the LORD hath spoken it. 12. Arise thou therefore, get thee to thine own house: and when thy feet enter into the city, the child shall die. 13. And all Israel shall mourn for him; and bury him: for he only of Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him there is found *some good thing toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam*. 14. Moreover the LORD shall raise him up a king over Israel, who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day: but what? even now. 15. For the LORD shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking the LORD to anger. 16. And he shall give Israel up, because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin. 17. ¶ And Jeroboam's wife arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah: and when she came to the threshold of the door, the child died. 18. And they buried him; and all Israel mourned for him according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by the hand of his servant Ahijah the prophet. 19. And the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred, and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. 20. And the days which Jeroboam reigned, were two and twenty years, and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his stead.

When those that set up idols, and keep them up, go to enquire of the Lord, he determines to answer them, not according to the pretensions of their enquiry, but according to the multitude of their idols, Ezek. xiv. 4. so Jeroboam is answered here; he prevented her inquiry concerning the child, and foretels the ruin of Jeroboam's house for the wickedness of it; no one else durst have carried such a message, a servant would have smothered it, but his own wife cannot be suspected of ill will to him.

1. God calls himself the Lord God of Israel, this Israel had forsaken God, God had not cast them off, nor given them a bill of divorce for their whoredoms: he is Israel's God, and therefore will take vengeance on him who did them the greatest mischief he could do them, debauched them, and drew them away from him.

2. He upbraids Jeroboam with the great favour he had bestowed upon him, in making him king, exalting him from among the people, the common people, to be prince over God's chosen Israel, and taking the kingdom from the house of David, to bestow it upon him; whether we keep an account of God's mercy to us or no, he doth, and will set even them in order before us, if we be ungrateful, to our greater confusion; otherwise he gives and upbraids not.

3. He chargeth him with his impiety and his apostasy, and his idolatry particularly, *Thou hast done evil above all that were before thee*, ver. 9. Saul, that was rejected, never worshipped idols; Solomon did it but occasionally, in his dotage, and never made Israel to sin; Jeroboam's calves, though pretended to be set up in honour of the God of Israel, that brought them up out of Egypt, yet are here called other gods, or strange gods, because in them he worshipped God, as the heathen worshipped their strange gods; because by them he changed the truth of God into a lie, and represented him as altogether other than he is; and because many of the ignorant worshippers terminated their devotion in the image, and not at all regard the God of Israel. Though they were calves of gold, the richness of the metal was so far from making them acceptable to God, that they provoked him to anger, designedly affronted him, under colour of pleasing him. In doing this, 1. He had not set David before him, ver. 8. *Thou hast not been as my servant David*, who, though he had his faults, and some bad ones, yet he never forsook the worship of God, nor grew loose or cold to that; his faithful adherence to that, gained him this honourable character, that he followed God with all his heart, and herein he was proposed for an example to all his successors; those did not do well, that did not like David. 2. He had not set God before him, but ver. 9. *Thou hast cast me behind thy back*, my law, my fear, neglected me, forgotten me, and preferred thy policies before my precepts.

4. He foretels the utter ruin of Jeroboam's house, ver. 10, 11. He thought by his idolatry to establish his government, and by that he not only lost it, but brought destruction upon his family: universal destruction of all the males, whether shut up or left, married or unmarried: shameful destruction, they shall be taken away as dung, which is loathsome, and which men are glad to be rid of. He worshipped dunghill deities, and God removed his family to a great dunghill; and noble royal families, if wicked, are no better in God's account. Unusual destruction, their very dead bodies should be meat for the dogs in the street, or the birds of prey in the field, ver. 11. Thus evil pursues sinners. See this fulfilled, chap. xv. 29.

He foretels the immediate death of the child that was now sick, ver. 12, 13. 1. In mercy to him, lest if he live he be infected with the sin, and so involved in the ruin of his father's house. Observe the character given of him. *In him was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam*. He only had an affection for the true worship of God, and disliked the worship of the calves. Note, (1.) Those are good, in whom are good things towards the Lord God of Israel. Good inclinations,

good intentions, and good desires towards him. (2.) Where there is but some good thing of that kind, it will be found; God that seeks it, sees it, he it never so little, and is pleased with it. (3.) A little grace goes a great way with great folks. It is so rare to find princes well affected to religion, that when they are so, they are worthy of double honour. (4.) Pious dispositions are in a peculiar manner amiable and acceptable, when they are found in those that are young. The divine image in miniature, has a peculiar beauty and lustre in it. (5.) Those that are good in bad times and places, shine very bright in the eyes of God. A good child in the house of Jeroboam, is a miracle of divine grace: to be there untainted, is like being in the fiery furnace unhurt, unfined.—Observe the care taken of him: he only of all Jeroboam's family shall die in honour; shall be buried, and shall be lamented, as one that lived desired. Note, Those that are distinguished by the divine grace, shall be distinguished by the divine providence. This hopeful child dies first of all the family, for God often takes them *soonest whom he loves best*; heaven is the fittest place for them, this earth is not worthy of them. 2. In wrath to the family. It was a sign the family would be ruined, when he was taken by whom it might have been reformed. The righteous are removed from the evil to come in this world to the good to come in a better world.—It is an ill omen to a family, when the best in it are buried out of it; when what was valuable is picked out, the rest is for the fire. It is likewise a present affliction to the family and kingdom, by which both ought to have been bettered. It aggravated it to the poor mother, that should not reach home time enough to see her child alive. *When thy feet enter into the city, just then the child shall die*. This was to be a sign to her of the accomplishment of the rest of the threatenings, as 1 Sam. ii. 34.

6. He foretels the setting up of another family to rule over Israel, ver. 14. This was fulfilled in Baasha of Issachar, who conspired against Nadab the son of Jeroboam, in the second year of his reign, murdered him and all his family. *But what? even now*. What do I speak of it as a thing at a distance? It is at the door, it shall be done, *even now*. Sometimes God makes quick work with sinners; he did so with the house of Jeroboam: It was not twenty-four years from his first elevation to the final extirpation of his family.

7. He foretels the judgments which should come upon the people of Israel, for conforming to the worship which Jeroboam had established. *If the blind lead the blind*, both the blind leaders and the blind followers shall fall into the ditch. It is here foretold, ver. 15. (1.) That they should never be easy, nor rightly settled in their land, but continually shaken like a reed in the water. After they left the house of David, the government never continued long in one family, but one undermined and destroyed another, which must needs occasion great disorders and disturbances among the people. (2.) That they should ere long be totally expelled out of their land, that good land, and given up to ruin, ver. 16. This was fulfilled in the captivity of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria. Families and kingdoms are ruined by sin, ruined by the wickedness of the heads of them. *Jeroboam did sin, and made Israel to sin*. If great men do wickedly, they involve many others both in the guilt and in the snare, multitudes follow their pernicious ways: They go to hell with a long train, and their condemnation will be more intolerable, who must answer not only for their own sins, but for the sins which others have been drawn into and kept in by their influence.

Jeroboam's wife has nothing to say against the word of the Lord, but home she goes with a heavy heart to their house in Tirzah, a *sweet delightful place*, so the name signifies, famed for its beauty, Cant. vi. 4. But death cannot be shut out from it, which will stain its beauty, and embitter all its delights. Hither she came, and here we leave her attending the funeral of her son, and expecting the fate of her family.

(1.) *The child died*, ver. 17. and justly did all Israel mourn, not only for the loss of so hopeful a prince, whom they were not worthy of, but because his death plucked up the flood-gates, and made a breach, at which an inundation of judgments broke in.

(2.) Jeroboam himself died soon after, ver. 20. It is said, 1 Chron. xiii. 20. *The Lord struck him with some sore disease*, so that he died miserably when he had reigned twenty-two years; and left his crown to a son who lost it, and his life too, and all the lives of his family, within ten years after. For a farther account of him the reader is referred to the annals of his reign, drawn up by his own secretaries, or to the public records, like those in the Tower, called here, 'The book or register of the chronicles of the kings of Israel,' to which then recourse might be had; but not being divinely inspired, they are long since lost.

21. ¶ And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah: Rehoboam was forty and one years old, when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD did choose out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there: and his mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess. 22. And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. 23. For they also built them high-places, and images and groves on every high hill, and under every green tree. 24. And there were also sodomites in the land, and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. 25. ¶ And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem: 26. And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all; and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made. 27. And king Rehoboam made in their stead brazen shields, and committed them unto the hands of the chief of the guard, which kept the door of the king's house. 28. And it was so, when the king went into the house of the LORD, that the guard bare them, and brought them back into the guard-chamber. 29. ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, are they not written in the books of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 30. And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days. 31. And

And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess. And Abijam his son reigned in his stead.

Judah's story and Israel's are intermixed in this book: Jeroboam outlived Rehoboam four or five years, yet his history is dispatched first, that the account of Rehoboam's reign may be laid together; and a sad account it is.

1. Here is no good said of the king. All the account we have of him here is, 1. That he was forty-one years old when he began to reign, and by that reckoning he was born in the last year of David, and had his education, and the forming of his mind, in the best days of Solomon; yet he lived not up to it. Solomon's delinquency at last did more to corrupt him, than his wisdom and devotion had done to principle him well. 2. That he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city where God put his name, where he had opportunity enough to know his duty, if he had had but a heart to do it. 3. That his mother was Naamah an Ammonitess, this is twice mentioned, ver. 21—31. It was strange David would marry his son Solomon to an Ammonitess, (for it was done while he lived) but it is likely Solomon was in love with her, because she was Naamah, a beauty, so it signifies, and his father was loth to cross him, but it proved to have a very ill influence upon posterity. Probable she was daughter to Shobai the Ammonite, who was kin to David, 2 Sam. xvii. 27, and David was too willing to requite him by matching his son into his family. None can imagine how lasting and how fatal the consequences may be of being unequally yoked with unbelievers. 4. That he had continual war with Jeroboam, ver. 30, which could not be but a perpetual uneasiness to him. 5. That when he had reigned but seventeen years, he died, and left his throne to his son. His father, and grandfather, and grandson, that reigned well, reigned long, forty years apiece, but sin often shortens men's lives and comforts.

2. Here is a great deal of ill said of the kingdom, both as to their character and their condition.

(1.) See here how wicked and profane they were. It is a most sad account that is here given of their apostacy from God, ver. 22, 23, 24. Judah, the only professing people God had in the world, did evil in his sight, in contempt and defiance of him, and the tokens of his special presence with them; they provoked him to jealousy, as the adulterous wife provokes her husband, by breaking the marriage covenant. Their fathers had been bad enough, especially in the times of the judges, but they did abominable things, above all that their fathers had done. The magnificence of their temple, the pomp of their priesthood, and all the secular advantages with which their religion was attended, could not prevail to keep them tight to it; nothing less than the pouring out of the Spirit from on high, will keep God's Israel in their allegiance to him. The account here given of the wickedness of the Jews, agrees with that which the apostle gives of the wickedness of the gentile world, Rom. i. 21—24. so that both Jew and Gentile are all alike under sin, Rom. iii. 9. 1. They became vain in their imaginations concerning God, and changed his glory into an image, for they built them high places, images, and groves, ver. 23. profaning God's name, by affixing it to their images, and ordinances, by serving their idols with them. They foolishly fancied that they exalted God, when they worshipped him on high hills; and pleased him, when they worshipped him under the pleasant shadow of green trees. 2. They were given up to vile affections, as those idolaters, Rom. i. 26, 27. for there were sodomites in the land, ver. 24. Men with men working that which is unseemly, and not to be thought of, much less mentioned, without abhorrence and indignation. They dishonoured God by one sin, and then God left them to dishonour themselves by another. They profaned the privileges of a holy nation, therefore God gave them up to their own hearts lusts, to imitate the abominations of the accursed Canaanites; and herein the Lord was righteous. And when they did like them that were cast out, how could they expect any other but to be cast out like them?

(2.) See here how weak and poor they were; and this was the consequence of the former; Sin expelleth, impoverisheth, and weakeneth any people. Shishak king of Egypt came against them, and so far, either by force or surrender, made himself master of Jerusalem itself, that he took away the treasures both of the temple, and of the exchequer, of the house of the Lord, and of the king's house, which David and Solomon had amassed, ver. 25, and to save the rest, Rehoboam perhaps tamely surrendered them, as Ahab, chap. xx. 4. He also took away the golden shields, that were made but in his father's time, ver. 26. these the king of Egypt carried off as trophies of his victory; and instead of them, Rehoboam made brasen shields, which the life-guard carried before him when he went to church in state, ver. 27, 28. This was an emblem of the diminution of his glory. Sin makes the gold become dim, changes the most fine gold, and turns into brass. We commend Rehoboam for going to the house of the Lord, perhaps the offerer for the rebuke he had been under, and do not condemn him for going in pomp. Great men should honour God with their honour, and then they are themselves most honoured by it.

C H A P. XV.

In this chapter we have an abstract of the history, (1.) Of two of the kings of Judah. 1. Abijam, the days of whose reign were few and evil, ver. 1—8. 2. Asa, who reigned well and long; ver. 9—24. (2.) Of two of the kings of Israel, Nadab the son of Jeroboam, and Baasha the destroyer of Jeroboam's house, ver. 25—34.

1. **N**OW in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat, reigned Abijam over Judah. 2. Three years reigned he in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. 3. And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him; and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father. 4. Nevertheless, for David's sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem: 5. Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. 6. And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life. 7. Now the rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, are

they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? And there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam. 8. And Abijam slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead.

We have here a short account of the reign of Abijam, the son of Rehoboam king of Judah. He makes a better figure, 2 Chron. xiii. where we have an account of his war with Jeroboam, the speech he made before the armies engaged, and the wonderful victory he obtained by the help of God, than he doth here: There he is called Abijah, *My father is the Lord*, because no wickedness is there laid to his charge: But here, where we are told of his faults, *Jah*, the name of God, is in disgrace to him taken away from his name, and he is called Abijam, Jer. xxii. 24.

Little particular is related concerning him. 1. He began his reign in the beginning of Jeroboam's eighteenth year, for Rehoboam reigned but seventeen, chap. xiv. 21. Jeroboam indeed survived Rehoboam, but Rehoboam's Abijah lived to succeed him, and to be a terror to Jeroboam, while Jeroboam's Abijah, whom we read of chap. xiv. 1. died before him. 2. He reigned but three years, scarce that, for he died before the end of Jeroboam's twentieth year, ver. 9. Being made proud and secure by his great victory over Jeroboam, 2 Chron. xiii. 21. God cut him off to make way for his son Asa, who would be a better man. 3. His mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom, viz. Abshalom, David's son, as I am the rather inclined to think, because two other of Rehoboam's wives were his near relations, 2 Chron. xi. 18. one the daughter of Jerimoth, David's son; and another the daughter of Eliab, David's brother. He took warning by his father, not to marry strangers; yet thought it below him to marry his subjects, except they were of the royal family. 4. That he carried on his father's wars with Jeroboam. As there was continual war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam, not set battles, those were forbidden, chap. xii. 24. but frequent encounters, especially upon the borders; one making incursions and reprisals on the other: so there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam, ver. 7. till Jeroboam with a great army invaded him, and then Abijam, not being forbidden to act in his own defence, routed him, and weakened him, that he quieted him the rest of his reign, 2 Chron. xiii. 20.

But in general we are told, 1. That he was not like David, had no hearty affection for the ordinances of God; though to serve his purpose against Jeroboam, he pleaded his possession of the temple and priesthood, as that which he valued himself upon, 2 Chron. xiii. 10, 11, 12. Many boast of their profession of godliness, that are strangers to the powers of it; and plead the truth of their religion, who yet are not true to it. *His heart was not perfect with the Lord his God*; he seemed to have zeal, but he wanted sincerity; he began pretty well, but he fell off, and walked in all the sins of his father, followed his bad example, though he had seen the consequences of it. He that was all his days in war, ought to have been so wise as to make and keep his peace with God, and not to make him his enemy, especially having found him so good a friend in his war with Jeroboam, 2 Chron. xiii. 18. *Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness*, Isa. xxvi. 10. 2. That yet it was for David's sake that he was advanced, and continued upon the throne; it was for his sake, ver. 4, 5. that God thus set up his son after him; not for his own sake, or for the sake of his father, whose steps he trod in, but for the sake of David, whose example he would not follow. Note, It aggravates the sin of a degenerate seed, that they fare the better for the piety of their ancestors, and owe their blessings to it, and yet will not imitate it. They stand upon that bottom, and yet despise it, and trample upon it, and unreasonably ridicule and oppose that which they enjoy the benefit of. The kingdom of Judah was supported, (1.) That David might have a lamp, pursuant to the divine ordination of a lamp for his anointed, Psal. cxxxii. 17. (2.) That Jerusalem might be established; not only that the honours put upon it in David's and Solomon's time might be preserved to it, but that it might be reserved to the honours designed for it in after-times. The character here given of David is very great, that he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, but the exception very remarkable, save only in the matter of Uriah, nor wanting both his murder and the debauching of his wife: That was a bad matter; it was a remaining blot upon his name, a bar in his cleanness, and the reproach of it was not wiped away, though the guilt was. David was guilty of other faults, but they were nothing in comparison with that; yet even that being repeated of, though it be mentioned for warning to others, did not prevail to throw them out of covenant, nor to cut off the entail of the promise upon his seed.

9. ¶ And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, reigned Asa over Judah. 10. And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. 11. And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father. 12. And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. 13. And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burnt it by the brook Kidron. 14. But the high places were not removed: nevertheless, Asa his heart was perfect with the LORD all his days. 15. And he brought in the things which his father had dedicated, and the things which himself had dedicated, into the house of the LORD, silver and gold, and vessels. 16. ¶ And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. 17. And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. 18. Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants: And king Asa sent them to Benhadad the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, 19. *There is a league between me and thee, and between my father and thy father: behold I have sent unto thee a present of silver and gold: come and break thy league with Baasha king*

king of Israel, that he may depart from me. 20. So Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Aſa, and ſent the captains of the hoſts, which he had, againſt the cities of Iſrael, and ſmote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-beth-maachah, and all Cinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. 21. And it came to paſs, when Baaſha heard thereof, that he left off building of Ramah, and dwelt in Tirzah. 22. Then king Aſa made a proclamation throughout all Judah (none was exempted) and they took away the ſtones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baaſha had builded, and king Aſa built with them Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah. 23. The reſt of all the acts of Aſa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? Nevertheless, in the time of his old age he was diſeaſed in his feet. 24. And Aſa ſlept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoſhaphat his ſon reigned in his ſtead.

We have here a ſhort account of the reign of Aſa; we ſhall find a more copious hiſtory of it, 2 Chron. xiv. xv. and xvi.

Here is, 1. The length of it; *He reigned forty-one years in Jeruſalem*, ver. 10. In the account we have of the kings of Judah, we find the number of the good kings and the bad ones pretty nearly equal, but then we may obſerve, to our comfort, that the reign of the good kings was generally long, but that of the bad kings ſhort; the conſideration of which will make the ſtate of God's church not altogether ſo bad within that period as at firſt it ſeems: Length of days is within wiſdom's right hand. *Honour thy father*, much more thy heavenly father, *that thy days may be long*.

2. The general good character of it, ver. 11. *Aſa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord*. And that is right indeed which is ſo in God's eyes. Thoſe are approved whom he commendeth. He did as did David his father, kept cloſe to God, and to his inſtituted worſhip, was hearty and zealous for that which gave him this honourable character, that he was like David, though he was not a prophet, nor a paſmiſt, as David was. If we come up to the graces of thoſe that are gone before us, it will be our praiſe with God, though we come ſhort of their gifts. Aſa was like David, though he was neither ſuch a conqueror, nor ſuch an author, for *his heart was perfect with the Lord all his days*, ver. 14. *i. e.* He was both cordial and conſtant in his religion. What he did for God, he was ſincere in, ſteady and uniform, and did it from a good principle, with a ſingle eye to the glory of God.

3. The particular inſtances of Aſa's piety. His times were times of reformation: For, (1.) He removed that which was evil. There reformation begins; and a great deal of work of that kind his hand found to do: For though it was but twenty years after the death of Solomon that he began to reign, yet very groſs corruptions had ſpread far, and taken deep root. Immorality he firſt ſtruck at: *he took away the ſodomites out of the land*, ſuppreſſed the bawdy-houſes; for how can either prince or people proſper while thoſe cages of unclean and filthy birds, more dangerous than peſt-houſes, are ſuffered to remain? Then he proceeded againſt idolatry; *he removed all the idols*, even thoſe that his father had made, ver. 12. and if his father made them, he was the more concerned to remove them, that he might cut off the entail of the curſe, and prevent the viſiting of that iniquity upon him and his. Nay, which redounds much to his honour, and ſhews his heart was perfect with God, when he found idolatry in his court, he rooted it out thence, ver. 13. when it appears that Maachah his mother, or rather his grandmother, (but called his mother, becauſe ſhe had the education of him in his childhood) had an idol in a grove, though ſhe was his mother, his grandmother, though, it is likely, ſhe had a particular fondneſs for it, though being old ſhe could not live long to patronize it, though ſhe kept it for her own uſe only, yet he would by no means connive at it. Reformation muſt begin at home: Ill practices will never be ſuppreſſed in the country, while they are ſupported in the court. Aſa in every thing elſe will honour and reſpect his mother, he loves her well, but he loves his God better, and, like the Levites, Deut. xxxiii. 9. bravely forgets the relation when it comes in competition with his duty; and if ſhe be an idolater, (1.) Her idol ſhall be deſtroyed, publicly expoſed to contempt, defaced, and burnt to aſhes *by the brook Kidron*, on which it is probable he ſtrewed the aſhes, in imitation of Moſes, Exod. xxxii. 20. and in token of his deteſtation of idolatry, and his indignation at it, wherever he found it. Let no remains of a court idol appear. (2.) She ſhall be depoſed: He removed her from being queen, or from the queen, *i. e.* from converſing with his wife; he baniſhed her the court, and confined her to an obſcure and private life. They that have power, are happy when thus they have hearts to uſe it well. (3.) He re-eſta bliſhed that which was good, ver. 15. *He brought into the houſe of God the dedicated things*, which he himſelf had avowed out of the ſpoils of the Ethiopians he had conquered, and which his father had vowed, but lived not to bring in purſuant to his vow. We muſt not only ceaſe to do evil, but learn to do well; not only caſt away the idols of our iniquity, but dedicate ourſelves and our all to God's honour and glory. When thoſe that in their infancy were by baptiſm devoted to God, make it their own act and deed to join themſelves to him, and vigorously employ themſelves in his ſervice, that is, bringing in the dedicated things which they and their fathers have dedicated; it is neceſſary juſtice, rendering to God the things that are his.

4. The policies of his reign. He built cities himſelf to encourage the increaſe of his people, ver. 23. and to invite others to him by the conveniences of habitation: And he was very zealous to hinder Baaſha from building Ramah, becauſe he deſigned it for the cutting off or communication between his people and Jeruſalem, and to hinder thoſe who in obedience to God would come to worſhip there. An enemy muſt by no means be ſuffered to fortify a frontier town.

5. The faults of his reign. In both the things for which he was praiſed, he was found defective; their faireſt characters are not without ſome but or other in them. (1.) Did he take away the idols? That was well; but the high places were not removed, ver. 14. therein his reformation fell ſhort. He removed all images which were rivals with the true God, or falſe representations of him, but the altars which were ſet up in high places, and to which thoſe ſacrifices were brought which ſhould have been offered on the altar in the temple, thoſe he ſuffered to ſtand, thinking there was no great harm in them, they having been uſed by good men before the temple was built, and being loth to diſoblige the people who had a kindneſs for them, and were wedded to them both by cuſtom and convenience; whereas in Judah and Benjamin, the only tribes under Aſa's government, which lay ſo

near Jeruſalem and the altars there, there was leſs pretence for them than in thoſe tribes that lay more remote. They were againſt the law, which obliged them to worſhip at one place, Deut. ii. 11. leſſened men's eſteem of the temple and the altars there, and were an open gap for idolatry to enter in at, while the people were ſo much addicted to it. It was not well that Aſa, when his hand was in, did not remove theſe; *nevertheleſs his heart was perfect with the Lord*. This affords us a comfortable note, that thoſe may be found honeſt and upright with God, and be accepted of him, who yet in ſome inſtances come ſhort of doing the good they might and ſhould do. The perfection which is made the indiſpenſible condition of the new covenant, is not to be underſtood of ſineſſneſs, (then we were all undone) but ſincerity. (2.) Did he bring in the dedicated things? That was well: But he afterwards alienated the dedicated things, when he took the gold and ſilver out of the houſe of God, and ſent it as a bribe to Benhadad, to hire him to break his league with Baaſha, and, by making an inroad upon his country, to give him a diverſion from the building of Ramah, ver. 18, 19. Here he ſinned, (1.) In tempting Benhadad to break his league, and ſo to violate the public faith. If he did ill to do it, as certainly he did, Aſa did ill to perſuade him to do it. (2.) In that he could not truſt God, who had done ſo much for him, to free him out of this ſtrait, without his uſing ſuch indirecſt means to help himſelf. (3.) In taking the gold out of the treasury of the temple, which was not to be made uſe of, but on extraordinary occasions. The project ſucceeded, Benhadad made a deſcent upon the land of Iſrael, which obliged Baaſha to retire with his whole force from Ramah, ver. 20, 21. which gave Aſa a fair opportunity to demolish his works there, and the timber and ſtones ſerved him for the building of ſome cities of his own, ver. 22. But though the deſign proſpered, we find it was diſpleaſing to God; and though Aſa valued himſelf upon the policy of it, and promiſed himſelf that it would effectually ſecure his peace, he is told by a prophet, that he had done fooliſhly, and that *from thenceforth he ſhould have wars*, ſee 2 Chron. xvi. 7, 8, 9.

6. The troubles of his reign. For the moſt part he proſpered: But, 1. Baaſha king of Iſrael was a very troubleſome neighbour to him. He reigned twenty-four years, and all his days had war, more or leſs, with Aſa, ver. 16. This was the effect of the diſunion of the kingdoms, that they were continually vexing one another, and ſo weakened one another, which made them both an eaſier prey to the common enemy. 2. In his old age, he was himſelf afflicted with the gout; he was diſeaſed in his feet, which made him leſs fit for buſineſs, and peeviſh towards thoſe about him.

7. The concluſion of his reign. The acts of it were more largely recorded in the common hiſtory (to which reference is here had, ver. 23.) than in this ſacred one. He reigned long, but finiſhed at laſt with honour, and left his throne to a ſucceſſor no way inferior to him.

25. ¶ And Nadab the ſon of Jeroboam began to reign over Iſrael, in the ſecond year of Aſa king of Judah, and reigned over Iſrael two years. 26. And he did evil in the ſight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in his ſin wherewith he made Iſrael to ſin. 27. ¶ And Baaſha the ſon of Ahijah, of the houſe of Iſſachar, conſpired againſt him; and Baaſha ſmote him at Gibbethon, which belongeth to the Philiftines, (for Nadab and all Iſrael laid ſiege to Gibbethon.) 28. Even in the third year of Aſa king of Judah, did Baaſha ſlay him, and reigned in his ſtead. 29. And it came to paſs, when he reigned, that he ſmote all the houſe of Jeroboam, he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had deſtroyed him, according unto the ſaying of the LORD, which he ſpake by his ſervant Ahijah the Shilonite: 30. Becauſe of the ſins of Jeroboam which he ſinned, and which he made Iſrael ſin, by his provocation wherewith he provoked the LORD God of Iſrael to anger. 31. ¶ Now the reſt of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Iſrael? 32. And there was war between Aſa and Baaſha king of Iſrael all their days. 33. In the third year of Aſa king of Judah began Baaſha the ſon of Ahijah to reign over all Iſrael in Tirzah, twenty and four years. 34. And he did evil in the ſight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his ſin wherewith he made Iſrael to ſin.

We are now to take a view of the miſerable ſtate of Iſrael, while the kingdom of Judah was happy under Aſa's good government. It was threatened, that they ſhould be as a reed ſhaken in the water, chap. xiv. 15. and ſo they were, when during the ſingle reign of Aſa, the government of their kingdom was in ſix or ſeven different hands, as we find in this and the following chapter. Jeroboam was upon the throne in the beginning of his reign, and Ahab at the end of it; between whom were Nadab, Baaſha, Elah, Zimri, Tibni, and Omri, undermining and deſtroying one another. This they got by deſerting the houſe both of God and of David.

Here is, 1. The ruin and extirpation of the family of Jeroboam, according to the word of the Lord by Ahijah. His ſon Nadab ſucceeded him. If the death of his brother Ahijah had had a due influence upon him, to make him religious, and the honour done him at his death, had engaged him to follow his good example, his reign might have been long and glorious; but he walked in the way of his father, ver. 26. kept up the worſhip of the calves, and forbade his ſubjects to go up to Jeruſalem to worſhip, ſinned, and made Iſrael to ſin, and therefore God brought ruin upon him quickly, in the ſecond year of his reign. He was beſieging Gibbethon, a city which the Philiftines had taken from the Danites, and was endeavouring to retake it; and there in the miſt of his army did Baaſha, with others, conſpire againſt him, and kill him, ver. 27. and ſo little intereſt had he in the affections of his people, that his army did not only not avenge his death, but choſe his murderer his ſucceſſor. Whether Baaſha did it upon a perſonal pique againſt Nadab, or to be revenged on the houſe of Jeroboam, for ſome affront received from them; or whether under pretence of freeing his country from the tyranny of an ill prince; or whether purely from a principle of ambition, to make way for himſelf to the throne, doth not appear; but he ſlew him, and reigned in his ſtead, ver. 28. And the firſt thing he did when he came to the crown, was to cut off all the houſe of Jeroboam, that he might the better ſecure himſelf, and his own uſurped government: He thought

thought it not enough to imprison or banish them, but he destroyed them, left not only none that pulled against the wall, i. e. no males, as was foretold, chap. xiv. 10. but none that breathed. Herein he was barbarous, but God was righteous. Jeroboam's sin was punished, ver. 30. for they that provoke God, do it to their own confusion, see Jer. vii. 19. Ahijah's prophecy was accomplished, ver. 29. for no word of God shall fall to the ground. Divine threatenings are not bugbears.

2. The elevation of Baasha. He shall be tried for a while, as Jeroboam was; twenty-four years he reigned, ver. 33. but thieved, it was not from any dislike to Jeroboam's sin that he destroyed his family, but from malice and ambition; for when he had rooted out the sinner, he himself clave to the sin, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, ver. 34. though he had seen the end of that way; so strangely was his heart hardened with the deceitfulness of sin.

C H A P. XVI.

This chapter is wholly concerning the kingdom of Israel and the revolutions of that kingdom, many in a little time. The utter ruin of Jeroboam's family, after it had been twenty-four years a royal family, we read of in the chapter before. In this chapter we have, 1. The ruin of Baasha's family, after it had been twenty-six years a royal family, foretold by a prophet, ver. 1—7. and executed by Zimri, one of his captains, ver. 8—14. 2. The seven days reign of Zimri, and his sudden fall, ver. 15—20. 3. The struggle between Omri and Tihni, and Omri's prevalency, and his reign, ver. 21—25. 4. The beginning of the reign of Ahab, whom we shall afterwards read much of, ver. 29—33. 5. The rebuilding of Jericho, ver. 34. All this while in Judah things went well.

1. **T**HEN the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying, 2. Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel, and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins: 3. Behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house: and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. 4. Him that dieth of Baasha in the city, shall the dogs eat: and him that dieth of his in the field, shall the fowls of the air eat. 5. Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 6. So Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah, and Elah his son reigned in his stead. 7. And also by the hand of the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani, came the word of the LORD against Baasha, and against his house, even for all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD, in provoking him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed him. 8. ¶ In the twenty and sixth year of Asa king of Judah, began Elah the son of Baasha to reign over Israel in Tirzah, two years. 9. And his servant Zimri (captain of half his chariots) conspired against him, as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, steward of his house in Tirzah. 10. And Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him, in the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead. 11. ¶ And it came to pass, when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on the throne, that he slew all the house of Baasha: he left him not one that pissed against a wall, neither of his kinsfolks, nor of his friends. 12. Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake against Baasha by Jehu the prophet. 13. For all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, by which they sinned, and by which they made Israel to sin, in provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities. 14. Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

Here is, 1. The ruin of the family of Baasha foretold: He was a man likely enough to have raised and established his family, active, politic, and daring; but he was an idolater, and that brought destruction upon his family. God sent him warning of it before, 1. That if he were thereby wrought upon to repent and reform, the ruin might be prevented, for God threatens, that he may not strike, as one that desires not the death of sinners. 2. That if not, it might appear, that the destruction, when it did come, whoever might be instruments of it, was the act of God's justice, and the punishment of sin. The warning was sent by Jehu the son of Hanani. The father was a seer or prophet at the same time, 2 Chron. xvi. 7. He was there sent to Aza king of Judah, but the son, who was young, and more active, was sent on this longer and more dangerous expedition to Baasha king of Israel. *Juniore ad labores.* This Jehu was a prophet, and the son of a prophet. Prophecy, thus happily entailed, was worthy of so much the more honour. This Jehu continued long in his usefulness, for we find him reproving Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xix. 2. above forty years after, and writing the annals of that prince, 2 Chron. xx. 24. The message which this prophet brought to Baasha, is much the same with that which Ahijah sent to Jeroboam by his wife. (1.) He minds him of the great things God had done for him, ver. 2. *I exalted thee out of the dust, to the throne of glory,* a great instance of the divine sovereignty and power, 2 Sam. ii. 8. Baasha seemed to have raised himself by his own treachery and cruelty, yet there was a hand of providence in it, to bring about God's counsels concerning Jeroboam's house; and God's owning his advancement as his act and deed, No. XLIII.*

doth by no means amount to the patronizing of his ambition and treason. It is God that puts power into bad men's hands, which he makes to serve his good purposes, notwithstanding the ill use they make of it. *I made thee prince over my people.* God calls Israel his people still, though wretchedly corrupted, because they retained the covenant of circumcision, and there were many good people among them; it was not till long after, that they were called *Ammon*, not a people, *II. i. 9.* (2.) He charges him with high crimes and misdemeanors. 1. That he had made Israel to sin, had seduced God's subjects from their allegiance, and had brought them to pay the homage due to him only to dunghill deities, and herein he had walked in the way of Jeroboam, ver. 2. and been like his house, ver. 7. (2.) That he had himself provoked God to anger with the work of his hands, i. e. by worshipping images, the work of men's hands; though others made them perhaps, he served them, and thereby avowed the making of them, and they are therefore called the work of his hands. (3.) That he had destroyed the house of Jeroboam, ver. 7. because he killed him, viz. Jeroboam's son, and all his; if he had done that with an eye to God, and to his will and glory, and from a holy indignation against the sins of Jeroboam and his house, he had been accepted and applauded as a minister of God's justice; but as he did it, he was only the tool of God's justice, but a servant to his own lusts, and is justly punished for the malice and ambition, which acted and governed him in all he did. They that are any way employed in denouncing or executing the justice of God, (magistrates or ministers) are concerned to do it from a good principle, and in a holy manner, lest it turn into sin to them, and they make themselves obnoxious by it. (3.) He foretells the same destruction to come upon his family, which he himself had been employed to bring upon the family of Jeroboam, ver. 3, 4. They that resemble others in their sins, may expect to resemble them in their plagues, especially those who seem zealous against those sins in others, which they allow themselves in; the house of Jehu was reckoned with for the blood of the house of Ahab, *Hos. i. 4.*

2. A reprieve granted for some time, so long that Baasha himself dies in peace, and is buried with honour in his own royal city, ver. 6. so far is he from being a prey either to the dogs or to the fowls, which yet was threatened to his house, ver. 4. he lives not either to see or feel the punishment threatened, yet he was himself the greatest delinquent; certain, there must be a future state, in which impenitent sinners will suffer in their own persons, and not escape, as often they do in this world; Baasha died under no visible stroke of divine vengeance for ought appears, but God laid up his iniquity for his children, as Job speaks, chap. xxi. 16. thus he often visits sins. Observe, That Baasha is punished by the destruction of his children after his death, and his children are punished by the abuse of their bodies after their death, that is the only thing which the threatening instanteth in, ver. 4. that the dogs and the fowls of the air should eat them, as if herein were designed a tacit intimation, That there are punishments after death, when death has done its worst, which will be the forest punishments, and are most to be dreaded; these judgments on the body and posterity, signified judgments on the soul when separated from the body, by him who after he has killed has power to cast into hell.

3. Execution done at last. Baasha's son Elah, like Jeroboam's son Nadab, reigned two years, and then was slain by Zimri, one of his own soldiers, as he was by Baasha, so like was his house made to that of Jeroboam, as was threatened, ver. 3. because his idolatry was like his, and one of the sins for which God contended with him, being the destruction of Jeroboam's family, the more like the destruction of his own was to that, the nearer did the punishment resemble the sin, as face answers to face in a glass.

(1.) As then, so now, the king himself was first slain, but Elah fell more ingloriously than Nadab; Nadab was slain in the field of action and honour, he and his army then besieging Gibbethon, chap. xv. 27. the siege being then raised upon that disaster, the city remaining still in the Philistines' hands, but the army of Israel was now renewing the attempt, ver. 15. and Elah should have been with them to command in chief, but he loved his own ease and safety better than his honour or duty, or the public good, and therefore staid behind to take his pleasure; and when he was drinking himself drunk in his servant's house, Zimri killed him, ver. 9, 10. Let it be a warning to drunkards, especially to those that designedly drink themselves drunk, that they know not but death may surprise them in that condition.

1. Death comes easily upon men when they are drunk; besides the chronic diseases which men frequently bring themselves into by hard drinking, and which cut them off in the midst of their days, men in that condition are easier overcome by an enemy, as Amnon by Absalom, and are liable to more ill accidents, being unable to help themselves. 2. Death comes terribly upon men in that condition, finding them in the act of sin, and incapacitated for any act of devotion; that day comes upon them at unawares, Luke xxi. 34. like a thief.

(2.) As then, so now, the whole family was cut off, and rooted out; the traitor was the successor, to whom the unthinking people tamely submitted, as if it were all one to them what king they had, so they had one; the first thing Zimri did, was to *slay all the house of Baasha*, thus he held by cruelty what he got by treason; his cruelty seems to have extended farther than Baasha's did against the house of Jeroboam, for he left to Elah none of his kinsfolks or friends, ver. 11. none of his vengeurs. so the word is, none that were likely to avenge his death, yet divine justice soon avenged it so remarkably, that it was used as a proverb long after, *Had Zimri peace that slew his master?* 2 Kings ix. 31. In this, 1. The word of God was fulfilled, ver. 12. 2. The sins of Baasha and Elah were reckoned for, with which they provoked God by their vanities, ver. 13. their idols are called their vanities, for they cannot profit nor help; miserable are those whose deities are vanities.

15. ¶ In the twenty and seventh year of Aza king of Judah, did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah: and the people were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines. 16. And the people that were encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also slain the king: wherefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp. 17. And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah. 18. And it came to pass when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died; 19. For his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin. 20. Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he wrought, are they not written in the

book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 21. ¶ Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king: and half followed Omri. 22. But the people that followed Omri; prevailed against the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath; so Tibni died, and Omri reigned. 23. ¶ In the thirty and first year of Afa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel twelve years; six years reigned he in Tirzah. 24. And he bought the hill Samaria, of Shemer, for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill, Samaria. 25. ¶ But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that were before him. 26. For he walked in all the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities. 27. Now the rest of the acts of Omri, which he did, and his might that he shewed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 28. So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria, and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.

Solomon observes, *Prov. xxviii. 2.* that for the transgression of a land, many were the princes thereof, (so as it was here in Israel) but by a man of understanding the state thereof shall be prolonged. So it was with Judah at the same time under Afa; when men forsake God, they are out of the way of rest and establishment; Zimri, and Tibni, and Omri, are here striving for the crown; proud aspiring men ruin one another, and involve others in the ruin: these confusions end in the settlement of Omri, we must therefore take him along with us, through this part of the story.

1. How he was chosen, as the Roman emperors often were, by the army in the field, now encamped before Gibbethon; notice was soon brought thither that Zimri had slain their king, *ver. 16.* and set up himself in Tirzah, the royal city, whereupon they chose Omri king in the camp, that they might without delay avenge the death of Elah upon Zimri; though he was but an idle drunken sot, yet he was their king, and they would not tamely submit to his murderer, nor let the treason go unpunished; they did not attempt to avenge the death of Nadab upon Baasha, perhaps because the house of Baasha had ruled with more gentleness than the house of Jeroboam; but Zimri shall feel the resentments of the provoked army; the siege of Gibbethon is quitted; (Philistines are sure to gain when Israelites quarrel) and Zimri is prosecuted.

3. How he conquered Zimri: he is said to have reigned seven days, *ver. 15.* so long before Omri was proclaimed king, and himself proclaimed a traitor, but we may suppose it a longer time before he died, for he continued long enough to shew his inclination to the way of Jeroboam, and to make himself obnoxious to the justice of God, by supporting his idolatry, *ver. 19.*—Tirzah was a beautiful city, but not fortified, so that Omri soon made himself master of it, *ver. 17.* forced Zimri into the palace, which, being unable to defend and yet unwilling to surrender, he burnt and himself in it, *ver. 18.* grudging that his rival should ever enjoy that sumptuous palace, he burnt it; and fearing that if he fell into the hands of the army, either alive or dead, he should be ignominiously treated, he burnt himself in it; see what desperate practices mens wickedness sometimes bring them to, and how it hurries them into their own ruin; see the genius of incendiaries, who set palaces and kingdoms on fire, though they are themselves in danger of perishing in the flames.

3. How he struggled with Tibni, and at length got clear of him; *half the people followed Tibni*, *ver. 21.* probably those were in Zimri's interest, with whom others joined, who would not have a king chosen in the camp, lest he should rule by the sword, and a standing army, but in a convention of the states; the contest between those two lasted some years, and, it is likely, cost a great deal of blood on both sides, for it was in the twenty-seventh year of Afa that Omri was first elected, *ver. 15.* and from thence the twelve years of his reign are to be dated, but it was not till the thirty-first year of Afa that he began to reign without a rival, then Tibni died, it is likely in battle, and Omri reigned, *ver. 22.* Sir Walter Raleigh, in the History of the World, l. 2. c. 19. § 6. enquires here, why it was, that in all these confusions and revolutions of the kingdom of Israel they never thought of returning to the house of David, and uniting themselves again to Judah? for then it was better with them than now, and he thinks the reason was, because the kings of Judah assumed a more absolute, arbitrary, and despotical power, than the kings of Israel; it was the heaviness of the yoke that they complained of, when they first revolted from the house of David, and the dread of that made them averse to it ever after, and adhere to kings of their own, who ruled more by law, and the rules of a limited monarchy.

4. How he reigned, when he was at length settled on the throne. 1. He made himself famous by building Samaria, which ever after was the royal city of the kings of Israel, the palace at Tirzah being burnt, and in process of time grew so considerable, that it gave name to the middle part of Canaan, which lay between Galilee on the north, and Judea on the south, and to the inhabitants of the country, who were called Samaritans.—He bought the ground for two talents of silver, somewhat more than seven hundred pounds of our money, (for a talent was three hundred fifty-three pounds eleven shillings and ten-pence halfpenny.) Perhaps, Shemer, that sold him the ground, let him have it considerably the cheaper, upon condition, that the city should be called after his name, which otherwise would have borne the name of the purchaser; it was called Samaria, or Shemerem, as it is in the Hebrew, from Shemer, the *quandam* owner, *ver. 24.* The kings of Israel changed their royal seats, Shechem first, then Tirzah, now Samaria, but the kings of Judah were constant to Jerusalem, the city of God; they that cleave to the Lord, fix; they that leave him, ever wander.—2. He made himself infamous by his wickedness, for he did worse than all that were before him, *ver. 25.* Though he was brought to the throne with much difficulty, and providence had remarkably favoured him in his advancement yet he was more prophane, or more superstitious, and a greater persecutor, than either the houses of Jeroboam or Baasha; he went further than they had done, in establishing iniquity by a law, and forcing his subjects to comply with him in it; for we read of the statutes of Omri, the keeping of which made Israel a desolation, Micah vi. 16. Jeroboam made Israel to sin by temptation, example, and allurement, but Omri did it by compulsion.

5. How he ended his reign, *ver. 27, 28.* He was in some repute for the might which he shewed; many an ill man has been a stout man.—He died in his bed as Jeroboam and Baasha did themselves, but like them, left

it to his posterity to fill up the measure, and then pay off the scores of his iniquity.

29. ¶ And in the thirty and eighth year of Afa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria, twenty and two years. 30. And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, above all that were before him. 31. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. 32. And he reared up an altar for Baal, in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. 33. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger, than all the kings of Israel that were before him. 34. ¶ In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.

We have here the beginning of the reign of Ahab, of whom we have more particulars recorded, than of any of the kings of Israel; we have here only a general idea given us of him, as the worst of all the kings, that we may expect what the particulars will be; he reigned twenty-two years, long enough to do a deal of mischief.

1. He exceeded all his predecessors in wickedness, *did evil above all that were before him*, *ver. 30.* and as if it were done with a particular enmity both to God and Israel, to affront him, and ruin them; it is said, *he did more, purposely to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger*, and consequently to send judgments on his land, *than all the kings of Israel that went before him*, *ver. 31.* It was bad with the people, when their kings were each worse than other, what would they come to at last? He had seen the ruin of other wicked kings and their families, yet instead of taking warning, his heart was hardened and enraged against God by it.—He thought it a light thing to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, *ver. 31.* it was nothing to break the second commandment by image worship, he would set aside the first two by introducing other gods; his little finger should fall heavier upon God's ordinances than Jeroboam's loins; making light of lesser sins makes way for greater, and they that extenuate other peoples sins will aggravate their own.

2. He married an ill woman, whom he knew would bring in the worship of Baal, and seemed to marry her with that design.—*As if it had been a light thing to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, he took to wife Jezebel*, *ver. 31.* a zealous idolater, extremely imperious and malicious in her natural temper, addicted to witchcrafts and whoredoms, 2 Kings ix. 22. and every way vicious; that false prophetess spoken of, Rev. ii. 20. is here called Jezebel, for an ill woman could not be called by a worse name than her's; what mischief she did, and what mischief at last befel her, 2 Kings ix. 33. we shall find in the following story: this one strange wife debauched Israel more than all Solomon's.

3. He set up the worship of Baal, forsook the God of Israel, and served the god of the Zidonians, Jupiter instead of Jehovah; the sun, so some think; a deified hero of the Phenicians, so others; he was weary of the golden calves, and thought they had worshipped them long enough; such vanities were they, that those who had been the fondlest of them, at length grew sick of them, and, like adulterers, must have variety. In honour of this mock deity, whom they called Baal, lord, and for the convenience of his worship, 1. Ahab built a temple in Samaria, the royal city, because the temple of God was in Jerusalem, the royal city of the other kingdom; he would have Baal's temple near him, that he might the better frequent it, protect it, and put honour upon it. 2. He reared an altar in that temple, on which to offer sacrifices to Baal, by which they acknowledged their dependance upon him, and sought his favour. O the stupidity of idolaters, who are at a great expence to make one their friend, whom they might have chosen whether they would have made a god of or no! 3. He made a grove about his temple, either a natural one, by planting shady trees there, or, if those would be too long in growing, an artificial one in imitation of it, for it is not said he planted, but made a grove, something that answered the intention, which was to conceal, and so countenance the abominable impurities that were committed in the filthy worship of Baal. *Lucus a lucendo, quia non lucet.* He that doeth evil hates the light.

4. One of his subjects, in imitation of his presumption, ventured to build Jericho, in defiance of the curse Joshua had long since pronounced on him that should attempt it, *ver. 34.* It comes in as an instance of the height of impiety men were then arrived to, especially at Bethel, where one of the calves was, for of that city this daring sinner was. Observe, (1.) How ill he did, like Achan, he meddled with the accursed thing, turned that to his own use which was devoted to God's honour; he began to build in defiance of the curse well known in Israel, jesting with it perhaps as a bugbear, or fancying its force worn out by length of time, for it was above five hundred years since it was pronounced, *Josh. vi. 26.* He went on to build in defiance of the execution of the curse in part, for though his eldest son died when he began, yet he would proceed in contempt of God, and his wrath revealed from heaven against his ungodliness. (2.) How ill he sped, he built for his children, but God wrote him childless; his eldest son died when he began, the youngest when he finished, and all the rest (it is supposed) between. Note, Those whom God curseth are curseth indeed none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered. God keep us back from presumptuous sins, those great transgressions!

C H A P. XVII.

So sad was the character of both the princes and people of Israel in the foregoing chapter, that one would expect God should cast off a people that had so cast him off; but as an evidence to the contrary, never was Israel so blessed with a good prophet as when it was so plagued with a bad king, never was a king so bold to sin as Ahab, never was a prophet so bold to reprove and threaten as Elijah, whose story begins in this chapter, and is full of wonders; scarce any part of the Old Testament history shines brighter than this of the spirit and power of Elias, he only of all the prophets had the honour of Enoch, the first prophet, to be translated, that he should not see death, and the honour of Moses, the great prophet, to attend our Saviour in his transfiguration; the other prophets prophesied and wrote, he prophesied and acted, but wrote nothing, and his actions cast more lustre on his name than their writings on theirs. In this chapter we have,

(1.) His predictions of a famine in Israel through the want of rain, ver. 1. (2.) The provision God made for him in that famine, (1.) By the ravens at the brook Cherith, ver. 2—7. (2.) When that failed, by a widow of Sarephath, who received him in the name of a prophet, and had a prophet's reward, for (1.) He multiplied her meat and her oil, ver. 8—16. (2.) He raised her dead son to life, ver. 17—24. Thus his story begins with judgments and miracles, designed to awaken that stupid generation that had so deeply corrupted themselves.

1. **AND** Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. 2. And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 3. Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 4. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. 5. So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 6. And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening: and he drank of the brook. 7. And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

The history of Elijah begins somewhat abruptly: usually when a prophet enters, we have some account of his parentage, are told whose son he was, and of what tribe, but Elijah drops out of the clouds as it were, as if, like Melchisedek, he were without father, without mother, and without descent, which made some of the Jews fancy, he was an angel sent from heaven, but the apostle has assured us that *he was a man subject to like passions as we are*, (James v. 7.) which perhaps intimates that he was not only liable to the common infirmities of the human nature, but that by his natural temper he was a man of strong passions, more hot and eager than most other men, and therefore the more fit to deal with the daring sinners of the age he lived in: so wonderfully doth God suit men to the work he designs them for; rough spirits are called to rough services; the reformation needed such a man as Luther to break the ice.

Observe, (1.) His name, *Elijah, my God Jehovah is he*, so it signifies, is he that sends me, and will own me, and bear me out, is he to whom I would bring Israel back, and who alone can effect that great work. (2.) His country, he was of the inhabitants of Gilead, on the other side of Jordan, either of the tribe of Gad, or that half of Manasseh, for Gilead was divided between them, but whether a native of either of those tribes is uncertain; the obscurity of his parentage was no prejudice to his eminency afterwards; we need not enquire whence men are, but what they are; if it be a good thing no matter though it come out of Nazareth; Israel was sore wounded when God sent them this balm from Gilead, and this physician thence. He is called a Tishbite from Tishbe, a town in that country.

Two things we have an account of here in the beginning of his story. 1. How he foretold a famine, a long and grievous famine, with which Israel should be punished for their sins; that fruitful land, for want of rain should be turned into barrenness for the iniquity of them that dwell therein; he went and told Ahab this, did not whisper it to the people to make them dissatisfied to the government, but proclaimed it to the king, in whose power it was to reform the land, and so to prevent the judgment; it is probable, he reproved Ahab for his idolatry and other wickedness, and told him that unless he repented and reformed, this judgment would be brought upon his land, there should be *neither dew nor rain for some years*, none but according to my word, i. e. expect none till you hear from me again. The apostle teacheth us to understand this not only of the word of prophecy, but the word of prayer which turned the key of the clouds, James v. 17, 18, he prayed earnestly, in a holy indignation at Israel's apostasy, and a holy zeal for the glory of God, whose judgments were deferred, *that it might not rain*; and according to his prayers the heavens became brass till he prayed again that it might be rain. In allusion to this story, it is said of God's witnesses, Rev. 6. *These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy*.

Elijah lets Ahab know, (1.) That the Lord Jehovah is the God of Israel, whom he had forsaken. (2.) That he is a living God, and not like the gods he worshipped, which were dead dumb idols. (3.) That he was his servant in office, and a messenger sent from him, it is he before whom I stand, and to minister to him, or whom I now represent, in whose stead I stand, and in whose name I speak, in defiance of the prophets of Baal and the groves. (4.) That notwithstanding the present peace and prosperity of their kingdom, God was displeased with them for their idolatry, and would chastise them for it by want of rain, which when he withheld it was not in the power of the gods they served to bestow, for *are there any of the vanities of the heathen that can give rain?* Jer. xiv. 22. which would effectually prove their impotency, and the folly of those who left the living God to make their court to such as could do neither good or evil; and this he confirms with a solemn oath, *as the Lord God of Israel liveth*, that Ahab might stand the more in awe of the threatening, the divine life being engaged for the accomplishment of it. (5.) He lets him know what interest he had in heaven, it shall be according to my word: How big doth he speak when he speaks in God's name, as one who well understood that commission of a prophet, Jer. i. 10. *I have set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms*; the power of prayer, and the truth of God's word, for he performeth the counsel of his messengers.

2. How he was himself taken care of in that famine.

1. How he was hid. God bid him *go and hide himself by the brook Cherith*, ver. 3. This was intended not so much for his preservation, for it doth not appear that Ahab immediately sought his life, but as a judgment to the people, to whom if he had publicly appeared he might have been a blessing, both by his instructions and his intercession, and so have shortened the days of their calamity: but God had determined it should last three years and a half; and therefore so long appointed Elijah to abscond, that he might not be solicited to revoke the sentence, the execution whereof he had said should be according to his word: When God speaks concerning a nation to pluck up and destroy, he finds some way or other to remove those that should stand in the gap to turn away his wrath; it bodes ill to a people when good men and good ministers are ordered to hide themselves; when God intended to send rain upon the earth, then he bid Elijah *go, shew himself to Ahab*, chap. xvii. 1. For the present, in obedience to the divine command, he went and dwelt all alone in some obscure unfrequented place, where he was not discovered, probably among the reeds of the brook: If providence calls us to solicitude and retirement, it becomes us to acquiesce; when we cannot be useful we

must be patient, and when we cannot work for God we must sit still quietly for him.

2. How he was fed, though he could not work there, having nothing to do but to meditate and pray, (which would help to prepare him for his usefulness afterwards) yet he shall eat, for he is in the way of his duty, and verily he shall be fed, in the days of famine he shall be satisfied; when the woman, the church is driven into the wilderness, care is taken that she be fed and nourished there time, times, and a half time, i. e. three years and a half, which was just the time of Elijah's concealment. See Rev. xii. 6—14. Elijah must drink of the brook, and the ravens were appointed to bring him meat, ver. 4. and did so, ver. 6. Here, 1. The provision was plentiful, and good, and constant, bread and flesh twice a day, daily bread and food convenient: We may suppose, he fared not so sumptuously as the prophets of the groves, that did eat at Jezebel's table, chap. xviii. 19. and yet better than the rest of the Lord's prophets, whom Obadiah fed with bread and water, chap. xviii. 4. It well becomes God's servants, especially his servants the prophets, not to be nice and curious about their food, and to affect dainties and varieties; if nature be sustained, no matter though the palate be not pleased; instead of envying those who have daintier fare, we should think how many there are better than we, who live comfortably upon coarser fare, and would be glad of our leavings; Elijah had but one meal brought him at a time, every morning and every evening, to teach him not to take thought for the morrow; let those who have but from hand to mouth learn to live upon providence, and trust that for the bread of the day in the day, thank God for bread this day, and let to-morrow bring with it.

2. The caterers were very unlikely, the ravens brought it him. There was Obadiah and others in Israel that had not bowed the knee to Baal, who would gladly have entertained Elijah, but he is a man by himself, and shall be fed in an extraordinary way, he was a figure of John the Baptist, whose meat was locusts and wild honey; God could have sent angels to minister to him, as he did afterwards, chap. xix. 5. and as he did to our Saviour, Matt. iv. 11. but he chose to send by winged messengers of another nature, to shew that when he pleaseth he can serve his own purposes by the meanest creatures as effectually as by the mightiest; if it be asked, whence the ravens had this provision, how and where it was cooked, and whether they came honestly by it, we must answer as Jacob did, Gen. xxvii. 20. *The Lord our God brought it to them*, whose the earth is, and the fulness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein. But why ravens? (1.) They are birds of prey, greedy, devouring creatures, more likely to have taken his meat from him, or to have picked out his eyes, (Prov. xxx. 17.) but thus Samson's riddle is again unriddled, *out of the eater came forth meat*. (2.) They are unclean creatures, every raven after his kind was by the law forbidden to be eaten, Lev. xi. 16. yet Elijah did not think the meat they brought any the worse for that, but eat and gave thanks, asking no question for conscience sake. Noah's dove was a more faithful messenger to him than his ravens, yet here the ravens are faithful and constant to Elijah. (3.) Ravens feed on insects and carrion themselves, yet they brought the prophet man's meat, and wholesome food; it is pity those that bring the bread of life to others should themselves take up with that which is not bread. (4.) Ravens could bring but little, and broken meat, yet Elijah was content with such things as he had, and thankful he was fed though not feasted. (5.) Ravens neglect their own young ones, and do not feed them, yet when God pleaseth they shall feed his prophet; young lions and young ravens may lack and suffer hunger, but not they that feared the Lord. Psal. xxxiv. 10. (6.) Ravens are themselves fed by special providence, Job xxxviii. 41. Psal. cxxvii. 9. and now they feed the prophet; have we experienced God's special goodness to us and ours, let us reckon ourselves obliged thereby to be kind to those that are his for his sake. Let us learn from hence, (1.) To acknowledge the sovereignty and power of God over all the creatures, he can make what use he pleaseth of them, either for judgment or mercy. (2.) To encourage ourselves in God in the greatest straits, and never to distrust him; he that could furnish a table in the wilderness, and make ravens purveyors, cooks and servitors to his prophet, is able to supply all our needs according to his riches in glory.

Thus doth Elijah for a great while eat his morsels alone, and his provision of water which he has in an ordinary way from the brook fails him before that which he had by a miracle; the powers of nature are limited, but not the powers of the God of nature, Elijah's brook dried up, ver. 7. *because there was no rain*; if the heavens fail, earth fails of course; such are all our creature comforts, we lose them when we most need them, like the brooks in summer, Job vi. 15. But there is a river which makes glad the city of God, that never runs dry, Psal. xlv. 14. *a well of water that springs up to eternal life*. Lord, give us that living water!

8. ¶ And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 9. Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zion, and dwell there: behold I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. 10. So he arose, and went to Zarephath: and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. 11. And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. 12. And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and behold I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. 13. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not! go and do as thou hast said; but make me thereof, a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. 14. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. 15. And she went, and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she and he, and her house, did eat many days. 16. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD which he spake by Elijah.

We have here an account of the farther protection Elijah was taken under, and the farther provision made for him in his retirement; at destruction and famine he shall laugh that has God for his friend, to guard and maintain him; the brook Cherith is dried up, but God's care of his people, and kindness to them, never slackens, never fails, but is still the same, is still

continued

continued and drawn out to them that know him, Psal. xxxvi. 10. When the brook was dried up, Jordan was not, why did not God send him thither? surely because he would shew that he has variety of ways to provide for his people, and it is not tied to any one; God will now provide for him there, where he shall have some company and opportunity of usefulness, and not be as if he had been buried alive. Observe.

(1.) The place he is sent to; to Zarephath, or Sarepta, a city of Sidon, out of the borders of the land of Israel, ver. 9. Our Saviour takes notice of this as an early and ancient indication of the favour of God designed for the poor Gentiles, in the fulness of time, Luke iv. 25, 26. *Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias*, and some, it is likely, that would have bid him welcome to their houses; yet he is sent to honour and bless with his presence a city of Sidon, a gentile city, and so becomes (saith Dr. Lightfoot) *the first prophets of the Gentiles*. Israel had corrupted themselves with the idolatries of the nation, and were become worse than they, justly therefore is the casting off of them the riches of the world. Elijah was hated and driven out by his countrymen, therefore, *Lo, he turns to the Gentiles*, as the apostles were afterwards ordered to do, Acts xviii. 6. But why to a city of Sidon? Perhaps, because the worship of Baal, which was now the crying sin of Israel, came lately from thence with Jezebel, who was a Sidonian, chap. xvi. 31. therefore thither he shall go, that thence may be fetched the destroyer of that idolatry, even out of Sidon have I called my prophet, my reformer; Jezebel was Elijah's greatest enemy, yet, to shew her the impotency of her malice, God will find a hiding-place for him even in her country; Christ never went among the Gentiles, but once into the coast of Sidon, Matt. xv. 21.

(2.) The person that is appointed to entertain him, not one of the rich merchants or great men of Sidon, not such a one as Obadiah, that was governor of Ahab's house, and fed the prophets, but a poor widow woman destitute and desolate is commanded, (*i. e.* is made both able and willing) to sustain him; it is God's way, and it is his glory, to make use of, and put honour upon the weak and foolish things of the world—he is in a special manner the widows God, and feeds them, and therefore they must study what they shall render to him.

(3.) The provision made for him there; providence brought the widow woman to meet him very opportunely at the gate of the city, ver. 10. and by what is here related of what passed between Elijah and her we find,

1. Her case and character, and here it appears, (1.) That she was very poor and necessitous, she had nothing to live upon but a handful of meal and a little oil, needy at the best, and now by a general scarcity reduced to the last extremity, when she has eaten the little she has, for ought she yet fees, she must die for want, she and her son, ver. 12. she had no fuel but the sticks she gathered in the streets, and having no servant she must gather them herself, ver. 10. more likely to receive alms than to give entertainment, to her Elijah is sent, that he might still live upon providence; as much as he did when the ravens fed him; it was in compassion to the low estate of his handmaiden that God sent the prophet to her, not to beg of her, but to board with her and he would pay her well for his table.

(2.) That she was very humble and industrious, he found her gathering sticks, and preparing to bake her own bread, ver. 10, 12. her mind was brought to her condition, and she complains not of the hardship she was brought to, nor quarrels with the divine providence for withholding rain, but accommodates herself to it as well as she can; such as are of this temper in the day of trouble, are best prepared for honour and relief from God.

(3.) That she was very charitable and generous; when this stranger desired her to fetch him some water to drink, she readily went at the first word, ver. 10, 11. she objected not the present scarcity of it, nor asked him what he would give her for a draught of water, for now it was worth money, nor that he was a stranger, an Israelite, with whom perhaps Sidonians cared not for having any dealings, no more than the Samaritans, John. iv. 9. She did not excuse herself with her weakness through famine, or the urgency of her own affairs, did not tell him that she had something else to do than go of his errands, but left her gathering of the sticks for herself to fetch water for him, which perhaps she did the more willingly, being moved with the gravity of his aspect; we should be ready to do any office of kindness even to strangers; if we have not wherewith to give to the distressed, we must be the more ready to work for them; a cup of cold water, though it cost us no more than the labour of fetching, it shall in no wise lose its reward.

(1.) That she had a great confidence in the word of God; it was a great trial of her faith and obedience, when she told the prophet how low her stock of meal and oil was, and that she had but just enough for herself and son, and he bid her *make a cake for him*, and make his first, and *after prepare for herself and son*; if we consider, it will appear as great a trial as could be in so small a matter: *let the children first be fed* (might not she have said) charity begins at home, she was not the giving hand, had but a little, and when that was gone, knew not where to have more; a great deal more reason she had than Nabal to ask, *Shall I take my meal and my oil, and give it to one that I know not whence he is?* He did indeed make mention of the God of Israel, ver. 14. but what was that to a Sidonian? Or if she had a veneration for the name of Jehovah, and valued the God of Israel as the true God, yet what assurance had she that this stranger was his prophet or had any warrant to speak in his name? It was easy for a hungry vagrant to impose upon her with a sham, but she gets over all these objections, obeys the precept in dependence upon the promise, *she went and did according to the saying of Elijah*, ver. 25. *O woman, great was thy faith*, one has not found the like, *no not in Israel*; all things considered, it exceeded that of the widow, that when she had but two mites cast them into the treasury, she took the prophet's word that she should not lose by it, but it should be repaid with interest; those that can venture upon the promise of God, will make no difficulty of exposing and emptying themselves in his service, and give him his dues out of a little, and giving him his part first; they that deal with God must deal upon trust; seek first his kingdom and then other things shall be added; by the law the first-fruits were God's, tithe was taken out first, and the heave-offering of their dough was first offered, Numb. xv. 20, 21.—But surely the increase of this widow's faith to such a degree as to enable her thus to deny herself and depend upon the divine promise, was as great a miracle in the kingdom of grace, as the increase of her oil was in the kingdom of providence; happy are they that can thus against hope believe, and obey in hope.

2. The care God took of her and her guest, the barrel of meal wasted not nor did the cruse of oil fail, but still as they took from them, more was added to them by the divine power, ver. 16. Never did corn or olive so increase in the growing (saith Bishop Hall) as these did in the using; but the multiplying of the seed sown, 2 Cor. ix. 10. in the common course of providence, is an instance of the power and goodness of God not to be overlooked because common; the meal and the oil multiplied, not in the hoarding; but in the spending, for *there is that scattereth and yet encreaseth*; when God blesteth a little, it will go a great way, even beyond expectation; as on the contrary, though there be abundance, if he blow upon it, it comes to little, Hag. i. 5. ii. 16.

(1.) This was a maintenance for the prophet; still miracles shall be his daily bread; hitherto he was fed with bread and flesh, now with bread and oil, which they used as we do butter; Manna was both, for the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil, Numb. ix. 8. This Elijah was thankful for, though he had been used to flesh twice a day, and now had none at all; those that cannot live without flesh once a day at least, because they have been used to it, could not have boarded contentedly with Elijah, no not to live upon a miracle.

2. It was a maintenance for the poor widow and her son, and a recompence to her for entertaining the prophet; there is nothing lost by being kind to God's people and ministers, she that received a prophet had a prophet's reward; she gave him house-room; and he repaid her with food for her household; Christ has promised to those who open their doors to him, that he will come into them, and *sup with them and they with him*, Rev. iii. 20. Like Elijah here he brings to those who bid him welcome, not only his own entertainment, but theirs too.—See how the reward answered the service, she generously made one cake for the prophet, and was repayed with many for herself and her son; when Abraham offers his only son to God, he is told he shall be the father of multitudes; what is laid out in piety or charity, is set out to the best interest upon the best securities.—One poor meal's meat this poor widow gave the prophet, and in recompense of it *she and her son did eat many days*, ver. 15. above two years, in a time of general scarcity; and to have their food from God's special favour, and to eat it in such good company as Elijah's, made it more than doubly sweet; it is promised to them that trust in God, that they shall not be ashamed in the evil time but in the day of famine they shall be justified, Psalm xxxvii. 19.

17. ¶ And it came to pass after these things that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick, and his sickness was so fore, that there was no breath left in him. 18. And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my son to remembrance, and to slay my son? 19. And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. 20. And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? 21. And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. 22. And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came into him again and he revived. 23. And Elijah took the child and brought him down out of the chamber, into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: And Elijah said, See thy son liveth. 24. ¶ And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

We have here a farther recompense made to the widow for her kindness to the prophet; as if that were a small thing to be kept alive, her son when dead is restored to life, and so restored to her. Observe,

1. The sickness and death of the child, for ought appears, he was her only son, the comfort of her widowed estate.—He was led miraculously, and yet that did not secure him from sickness and death; *Your fathers did eat manna and are dead, but there is bread, of which a man may eat and not die*, which was given for the life of the world, John vi. 49, 50. This affliction was to this widow a thorn in the flesh, left she should be lifted up above measure with the favours that are done her and the honours that were put upon her. (1.) She was nurse to a great prophet, was employed to sustain him, and had reason to think surely the Lord would do her good, yet now she loses her child. Note, We must not think it strange if we meet with very sharp afflictions, even then when we are in the way of duty; and of eminent service to God. (2.) She was by herself nursed by miracle, and kept a good house without charge or care, by a distinguishing blessing from heaven, and in the midst of all this satisfaction she is thus afflicted. Note, When we have the clearest manifestations of God's favour and good will towards us, even then we must prepare for the rebukes of providence; our mountain never stands so strong but it may be moved, and therefore in this world we must always rejoice with trembling.

2. Her pathetic complaint to the prophet of this affliction; it should seem the child died suddenly, else she would have applied herself to Elijah while he was sick for the cure of him, but being dead, dead in her bosom, she expostulates with the prophet upon it, rather to give vent to her sorrow, than in any hope of relief, ver. 18.

(1.) She expresseth herself passionately, *What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God?* How unconcernedly had she spoke of her own, and her child's death, when she expected to die for want, ver. 12. *that we may eat it and die*; yet now her child dies, and not so miserably as by famine, she is extremely disturbed at it; we may speak lightly of an affliction at a distance, but when it toucheth us we are troubled, Job. iv. 5. Then she spoke deliberately, now in haste; the death of the child was now a surprise to her, and it is hard to keep our spirits composed, when troubles come upon us suddenly and unexpectedly, and in the midst of our peace and prosperity.—She calls him *man of God*, and yet quarrels with him, as if he had occasioned the death of her child, and is ready to wish she had never seen him, forgetting past mercies and miracles; what have I done against thee? so some understand it; wherein have I offended thee, or been wanting in my duty? *Show me wherefore thou contendest with me*.

(2.) Yet she expresseth herself penitently, *art thou come to call my son to thy remembrance*, as the cause of the affliction, and so to call it to my remembrance, as the effect of the affliction? Perhaps she knew of Elijah's intercession against Israel, and being conscious to herself of sin, perhaps her former worshipping of Baal, the god of the Sidonians, she apprehends he had made intercession against her. Note, 1. When God removes our comforts from us, he remembers our sins against us, perhaps the iniquities of our youth, though long since past, Job xiii. 26. Our sins are the death of our children. 2. When God thus remembers our sins against us, he designs thereby to make us remember them against ourselves, and repent of them.

3. The prophet's address to God upon this occasion, he gave no answer, to her expostulation, but brought it to God, and laid the case before him

not knowing what to say to it himself; he took the dead child from his mother's bosom to his own bed, *ver. 19.* Probably, he had taken a particular kindness to the child, and found the affliction his own more than by sympathy; he retired to his chamber, and, 1. He humbly reasons with God concerning the death of the child, *ver. 20.* He sees death striking by commission from God, *Thou hast brought this evil* for is there any evil of this kind in the city, in the family, and the Lord has not done it? He pleads the greatness of the affliction to the poor mother; it is *evil upon the widow*, thou art the widow's God, and dost not use to bring evil upon widows, it is affliction added to the afflicted; he pleads his own concern, it is the widow with whom I *sojourn*, wilt thou that art my God bring evil, upon one of the best of my benefactors; I shall be reflected upon, and others will be afraid of entertaining me, if I bring death into the houses where I come.—2. He earnestly begs of God to restore the child to life again, *ver. 21.* We do not read before this of any that were raised to life, yet *Elijah* by a divine impulse, prays for the resurrection of this child, which yet will not warrant us to do the like: David expected not by fasting and prayer to bring his child back to life, *1 Sam. xii. 23.* but *Elijah* had a power to work miracles, which David had not; he stretched himself upon the child, to affect himself with the case, and to shew how much he was affected with it, and how desirous he was of the restoration of the child, he would if he could put life into him by his own breath and warmth; also to give a sign of what God would by his power, and what he doth by his grace, in the raising of dead souls to a spiritual life, the Holy Ghost comes upon them, overshadows them, and puts life into them; he is very particular in his prayer, *I pray thee let this child's soul come into him again*; which plainly supposeth the existence of the soul in a state of separation from the body, and consequently its immortality; which *Crotius* thinks God designed by this miracle to give intimation and evidence of, for the encouragement of his suffering people.

4. The resurrection of the child, and the great satisfaction it gave to the mother; the child revived, *ver. 22.* See the power of prayer, and the power of him that hears prayer, who kills and makes alive; *Elijah* brought him to his mother, who we may suppose, could scarce believe her own eyes, and therefore *Elijah* assures her it is her own; it is *thy son that liveth*, see it is thy own and not another, *ver. 23.* The good woman hereupon cries out, *Now I know that thou art a man of God*; though she knew it before by the increase of her meal, yet the death of her child she took so unkindly, that she began to question it; a good man sure would not do her so ill a turn; but now she was abundantly satisfied, that he had both the power and goodness of a man of God, and will never doubt of it again, but give up herself to the conduct of his word, and the worship of the God of Israel. Thus the death of the child, like that of *Lazarus*, *John xi. 4.* was for the Glory of God, and the honour of his prophet.

C H A P. XVIII.

We left the prophet Elijah wrapped up in obscurity; it doth not appear, that either the increase of the provision, or the raising of the child, had made him taken notice of at Zarephath, for then Ahab would have discovered him, he would rather do good than be known to do it; but in this chapter his appearance was as public, as before his retirement, was close; the days appointed for his concealment, (which was part of the judgment upon Israel) being finished, he is now appointed to shew himself to Ahab, and expect rain upon the earth, ver. 1. Pursuant to this order we have here, 1. His interview with Obadiah, one of Ahab's servants, by whom he sent notice to Ahab of his coming, ver. 2—16. His interview with Ahab himself, ver. 17—19. 3. His interview with all Israel upon mount Carmel, in order to a public trial of titles between the Lord and Baal; and a famous solemnity it was, in which, (1.) Baal and his prophets were confounded. (2.) God and Elijah were honoured, ver. 21—29. 4. The execution he did upon the prophets of Baal, ver. 40. 5. The return of the mercy of rain at the word of Elijah, ver. 41—46. It is a chapter in which are many things very observable.

1. **A**ND it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab: And I will send rain upon the earth. 2. And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab: and there was a sore famine in Samaria. 3. And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house: (now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly: 4. For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.) 5. And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all the fountains of water, and unto all the brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts. 6. So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. 7. ¶ And as Obadiah was in the way, behold Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah? 8. And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. 9. And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? 10. As the LORD, thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. 11. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, behold, Elijah is here. 12. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth. 13. Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the No. LIII.*

prophets of the Lord? how I hid an hundred men of the LORD's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? 14. And now thou sayest, Go tell thy lord, Behold Elijah is here; and he shall slay me. 15. And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day. 16. So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

In these verses we find,

1. The sad state of Israel at this time upon two accounts, 1. *Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord*, *ver. 4.* *slew them*, *ver. 13.* Being an idolater, she was a persecuter, and made Ahab so. Even in those bad times, when the calves were worshipped, and the temple at Jerusalem deserted, yet there was some good people that feared God and served him, and some good prophets that instructed them in the knowledge of him, and assisted them in their devotions; the priests and levites were all gone to Judah and Jerusalem, *2 Chron. xi. 13, 14.* but instead of them God raised up these prophets, who read and expounded the law in private meetings, or in the families that retained their integrity, for we read not of any synagogues at this time; they had not the spirit of prophecy as *Elijah*, nor did they offer sacrifice or burn incense, but taught people to live well, and keep close to the God of Israel: These *Jezebel* aimed to extirpate, and put many of them to death; which was as much a public calamity as a public iniquity, and threatened the utter ruin of religion's poor remains in Israel: Those few that escaped the sword, were forced to abscond, and hide themselves in caves, where they were buried alive, and cut off, though not from life, yet from usefulness, which is the end and comfort of life; and when the prophets were persecuted and driven into corners, no doubt their friends, those few good people that were in the land, were in like manner treated.

Yet as bad as things were, (1.) There was one very good man, that was a great man at court, Obadiah, who answers his name, *a servant of the Lord*, one that feared God, and was faithful to him, and yet was a steward of the household to Ahab: Observe his character, he feared the Lord greatly, *ver. 3.* was not only a good man, but zealously and eminently good, his great place put a lustre upon his goodness and gave him great opportunities of doing good, and he feared the Lord from his youth, *ver. 12.* he began betimes, to be religious, and had continued long. Note, Early piety, as it is to be hoped, will be eminent piety; those that are good betimes, are likely to be very good; he that feared God from his youth, came to fear him greatly. He that will thrive must rise at five. But it is strange to find such an eminent good man governor of Ahab's house, an office of great honour, power, and trust. 1. It was strange so wicked a man as Ahab would prefer him to it, and continue him in it, certainly it was because he was a man of celebrated honesty, industry, and ingenuity, and one whom he could repose a confidence in, whose eyes he could trust as much as his own, as appears here, *ver. 5.* Joseph and Daniel were preferred, because there was none so fit as they for the places they were preferred to. Note, Those who profess religion, should study to recommend themselves to the esteem even of those that are without, by their integrity, fidelity, and application to business.

2. It was strange so good a man as Obadiah would accept of preferment in a court so addicted to idolatry, and all manner of wickedness. We may be sure it was not made necessary to qualify him for preferment, that he should be of the king's religion, that he should conform to the statutes of Omri, or the law of the house of Ahab; Obadiah would not have accepted the place, if he could not have had it without bowing the knee to Baal, nor was Ahab so impolitic as to exclude those from offices that were fit to serve him, merely because they would not join with him in his devotions; that man that is true to his God will be faithful to his prince.—Obadiah therefore could with a good conscience enjoy the place, and therefore would not decline it, or give it up, though he foresaw he could not do the good he desired to do in it; they that fear God need not go out of the world, as bad as it is. 3. It was strange that either he did not reform Ahab or Ahab corrupt him; but it seems they were both fixed, he that was filthy would be filthy still, and he that was holy would be holy still: Those fear God greatly that keep up the fear of him in bad times and places, thus Obadiah did; God had his remnant among all sorts, high and low; there were saints in Nero's household, and in Ahab's.—(2.) This great good man used his power for the protection of God's prophets, he hid one hundred of them in two caves, when the persecution was hot, and fed them with bread and water, *ver. 4.* He did not think it enough to fear God himself, but having wealth and power wherewithal to do it, he thought himself obliged to assist and countenance others that feared God; nor did he think his being kind to them would excuse him from being good himself, but he did both, he both feared God greatly himself, and patronized those that feared him likewise. See how God wonderfully raised up friends for his ministers and people, for their shelter in difficult times, there where one should least expect them; bread and water were now scarce commodities, yet Obadiah will find a competency of both for God's prophets, to keep them alive for service hereafter, though now they were laid aside.

(2.) When Jezebel cut off God's prophets, God cut off their necessary provisions by the extremity of the drought. Perhaps Jezebel persecuted God's prophets under pretence that they were the cause of the judgment, because *Elijah* had foretold it, *Christians add leones*; but God made them know the contrary, for the famine continued till Baal's prophets were sacrificed, and so great a scarcity of water there was, that the king himself and Obadiah went in person throughout the land to seek for grass for the cattle, *ver. 5, 6.*—Providence ordered it so, that Ahab might with his own eyes see how bad the consequences of this judgment were, that he might be the better inclined to hearken to *Elijah*, who would direct him into the holy way to put an end to it. Ahab's care was not to save all the beasts, many being already lost, but he took no care about his soul, not to lose that, took a deal of pains to seek grass, but none to seek the favour of God, fencing against the effect, but not inquiring how to remove the cause.—The land of Judah lay close to the land of Israel, yet we find no complaint there of the want of rain, for Judah yet ruled with God and was faithful with the joints and prophets, *Hos. xi. 12.* By which distinction Israel might plainly have seen the ground of God's controversy, when God caused it to rain upon one city and not upon another, *Amos iv. 7, 8.* but they blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts, and would not see.

2. The steps taken towards redress, by *Elijah's* appearing again upon the state to act as a Tishbite, a converter or reformer of Israel, for so (some think) that title of his signifies; turn them again to the Lord God of hosts, from whom they have revolted, and all will be well quickly; thus must be *Elijah's* doings. See *Luke i. 16, 17.*

1. Ahab had made diligent search for him, so we find here, *ver. 10.* had offered rewards to any one that would discover him, sent spies into every tribe and lordship of his own dominions, as some understand it, or, as others, into all the neighbour nations and kingdoms that were in alliance with him; 7 X and

and when they denied that they knew any thing of him, he would not believe them, unless they swore it, and, as should seem, promised likewise upon oath, that if ever they found him among them they would discover him and deliver him up.—It should seem, he made this diligent search for him, not so much that he might punish him for what he had done in denouncing the judgment, as that he might oblige him to undo it again, by recalling the sentence, because he had said it should be *according to his word*; having such an opinion of him as men foolishly conceive of witches, that if they can but compel them to bless that which they have bewitched, it will be well again, or such as the king of Moab had of Balaam: I incline to this, because we find when they came together, Elijah knowing what Ahab wanted him for, presently appointed him to meet him on mount Carmel, and Ahab complied with the appointment, though Elijah took such a way to revoke the sentence, and bless the land, as perhaps he little thought of.

2. God at length ordered Elijah to present himself to Ahab, because the time was now come when he would *send rain upon the earth*, ver. 1. or rather *upon the land*; above two years he had lain hid with the widow of Zarephath, after he had been concealed one year by the brook Chereth; so that the third of his sojourning there here spoken of, ver. 1. was the fourth of the famine, which lasted in all three years and six months, as we find, *Luke iv. 45. James v. 17.* Such was Elijah's zeal no doubt against the idolatry of Baal, and such his compassion to his people, that he thought it long to be thus confined to a corner, yet he appeared not till God bid him, *Go shew thyself to Ahab*, for now thine hour is come, even the time to favour Israel. Note, It bodes well to any people when God calls his ministers out of their corners, and bids them shew themselves, a sign he will *give rain on the earth*, however we may the better dispense with the bread of affliction while *our eyes see our teachers*, Isa. xxx. 20, 21.

3. Elijah first surrendered, or rather discovered himself to Obadiah. He knew by the Spirit where to meet him, and we are here told what passed between them.

1. Obadiah saluted him with great respect, fell on his face, and humbly asked, *Art thou my Lord Elijah?* ver. 7. As he had shewed the tenderness of a father to the sons of the prophets, so he shewed the reverence of a son to this father of the prophets; and by this made it appear that he did indeed *fear God greatly*, that he did honour to one that was his extraordinary ambassador, and had a great interest in heaven.

2. Elijah in answer to him. (1.) Transfers the title of honour he gave him to Ahab; call him my lord, not me: that is a fitter title for a prince than a prophet, *who seeks not honour from men*. Prophets should be called *shears*, and *shepherds*, and *watchmen*, and *ministers* rather than *lords*; as those that mind duty more than dominion. (2.) He bids Obadiah go tell the king that he was there to speak with him. *Tell my lord, behold Elijah is forth-coming*, ver. 8. He would have the king know before, that it might not *surprize* him, and that he might be sure it was the prophet's own act to present himself to him.

3. Obadiah begs to be excused from carrying this message to Ahab, for it might prove as much as his neck was worth. (1.) He tells Elijah what great search Ahab had made for him, and how much his heart was upon it to find him out, ver. 10. (2.) He takes it for granted that Elijah would again withdraw, ver. 12. *The spirit of the Lord shall carry thee*, (as it is likely he had done sometimes when Ahab thought he had been sure of him) *whither I know not*. See 2 Kings ii. 16. He thought Elijah was not in good earnest, when he bid him tell Ahab where he was, but intended only to expose the impotency of his malice; for he knew Ahab was not worthy to receive any kindness from the prophet, and it was not fit the prophet should receive any diskindness from him. (3.) He is sure Ahab would be so enraged at the disappointment, that he would put him to death for making a fool of him, or for not laying hands on Elijah himself when he had him in his reach, ver. 12. tyrants and persecutors in their passion are often unreasonably outrageous, even towards their friends and confidants. 4. He pleads that he did not deserve to be thus exposed and put in peril of his life, *What have I sinned?* ver. 9. Nay, ver. 13. *Was it not told my Lord how I hid the prophets?* He mentions this not in pride or ostentation, but to convince Elijah, that though he was Ahab's servant, he was not in his interest, and therefore deserved not to be bantered as one of the tools of his persecution. He that had protected so many prophets, he hoped, should not have his own life hazarded by so great a prophet. 4. Elijah satisfies him that he might with safety deliver this message to Ahab, by assuring him with an oath, that he would this very day present himself to Ahab, ver. 15. Let but Obadiah know that he spoke seriously, and really intended it, and he will make no scruple to carry the message to Ahab. Elijah wears by the *Lord of hosts*, who has all power in his hands, and was therefore able to protect his servant against all the powers of hell and earth.

5. Notice is hereby soon brought to Ahab, that Elijah had sent him a challenge to meet him immediately at such a place, and Ahab accepts the challenge, *he went to meet Elijah*, ver. 16. We may suppose it a great surprise to Ahab to hear that Elijah, whom he had so long sought, and not found, was now found without seeking. He went in quest of grails, and finds him from whose word at God's mouth he must expect rain. Yet his guilty conscience gives him little reason to hope for it, but rather to fear some other more dreadful judgment. Had he by his spies surprised Elijah, he would have triumphed over him, but now he was thus surprised by him, we may suppose he even trembled to look him in the face; hated him, and yet feared, as Herod did John.

17. ¶ And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art thou he that troubleth Israel?* 18. And he answered, I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim. 19. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. 20. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

We have here the meeting between Ahab and Elijah; as ill a king as ever the world was plagued with, and as good a prophet as ever the church was blessed with.

1. Ahab, like himself, basely accuseth Elijah; dares not strike him, remembering that Jeroboam's hand was withered when it was stretched out against a prophet, but gives him ill language, which was no less an affront to him that sent him. It is a very coarse compliment with which he accosts him at the first word, *Art thou he that troubled Israel?* ver. 17. How unlike was this to that with which his servant Obadiah saluted him, ver. 7. *Art thou my lord Elijah?* Obadiah feared God greatly; Ahab had sold himself

to work wickedness, and both discovered their character by the manner of their address to the prophet. One may guess how people stand affected to God, by observing how they stand affected to his people and ministers. Elijah now came to bring blessings to Israel, tidings of the return of the rain; yet he is thus affronted. Had it been true that he was *the troubler of Israel*, Ahab as king had been obliged to advert upon him. These are those who trouble Israel by their wickedness whom the conservator of the public peace are concerned to enquire after: But it was utterly false concerning Elijah; so far was he from being an enemy to Israel's welfare that he was the stay of it, *the chariots and horsemen of Israel*. Note, It has been the lot of the best and most useful men to be called and counted the troublemakers of the land, and to be run upon, and run down as public grievances. Even Christ and his apostles were thus misrepresented. Acts xvii. 6.

2. Elijah, like himself, boldly returned the charge upon the king, and proved it upon him, that he was *the troubler of Israel*, ver. 18. Elijah is not the Achan, *I have not troubled Israel*, have neither done them any wrong, nor designed them any hurt. They that procure God's judgments do the mischief, not he that foretells them only, and gives warning of them that the nation may repent and prevent them. *I would have healed Israel, but they would not be healed*. Ahab is the Achan, the troubler who follows Baalim those accursed things. Nothing creates more trouble to a land than the impiety and profaneness of princes and their families.

3. As one having authority immediately from the King of kings, he orders a convention of the states to be forthwith summoned to meet at mount Carmel, where there had been an altar built to God, ver. 30. Probably on that mountain they had an eminent high place, where formerly the pure worship of God had been kept up as well as it could be any where but at Jerusalem. Thither all Israel must come to give Elijah the meeting, and the prophets of Baal who were dispersed all the country over, with those of the groves that were Jezebel's domestic chaplains, must there make their personal appearance.

4. Ahab issues out writs accordingly for the convening of this great assembly, ver. 20. either because he feared Elijah, and durst not oppose him; Saul stood in awe of Samuel more than of God: Or because he hoped Elijah would bless the land, and speak the word that they might have rain, upon those terms they would be all at his beck. Those that slighted and hated his counsels would gladly be beholden to him for his prayers. Now God made those who said they were Jews and were not, but were of the *synagogue of Satan*, to come, and in effect to the worship of his feet, and to know that God had loved him, Rev. iii. 9.

21. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. 22. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. 23. Let them therefore give us two bullocks, and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under, and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: 24. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. 25. And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first: for ye are many: and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. 26. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal, from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. 27. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, Cry aloud, for he is a god, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. 28. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. 29. And it came to pass, when mid-day was past, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. 30. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him: and he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. 31. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name. 32. And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. 33. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. 34. And he said, Do it the second time; And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time: And they did it the third time. 35. And the water ran round about the altar, and he filled the trench also with water. 36. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day, that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. 37. Hear me, O LORD,

O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. 38. Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water, that was in the trench. 39. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD he is the God: the LORD, he is the God. 40. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape: and they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

Ahab and the people expected that Elijah should in this solemn assembly *blejs the land*, and pray for rain, but he has other work to do first: The people must be brought to repent and reform, and then they may look for the removal of the judgment, but not till then. This is the right method; God will first *prepare our heart*, and then *cause his ear to hear*; will first *turn us to him*, and then *turn to us*, Psalm x. 17. lxxx. 3. Deserters must not look for God's favour till they return to their allegiance. Elijah might have looked for rain seventy times seven times, and not have seen it, if he had not thus began his work at the right end.

Three years and half's famine would not bring them back to God, Elijah will endeavour to convince their judgments; and no doubt by special warrant and direction from heaven, he put the controversy between God and Baal upon a public trial. It was great condescension in God, that he would suffer to plain a case to be disputed; and would permit Baal to be a competitor with him; but thus God would have every mouth to be stopped, all flesh to become silent before him. God's cause is so uncontestably just, that it needs not fear to have the evidences of its equity searched into and weighed.

1. Elijah reproves the people for mixing the worship of God, and the worship of Baal together. Not only some Israelites worshipped God, and others Baal, but the same Israelites sometimes worshipped one, and sometimes the other. This he calls, *ver. 21. Halting between two opinions, or thoughts*. They worshipped God to please the prophets, but worshipped Baal to please Jezebel, and curry favour at court. They thought to trim the matter, and play on both sides, as the Samaritans, 2 Kings xvii. 33. Now Elijah shews them the absurdity of this; he doth not insist in their relation to Jehovah. Is he not yours, and the God of your fathers, but Baal the God of the Sidonians, and will a nation change their God? Jer. ii. 11. No, he waves the prescription, and enters upon the merits of the cause: there can be but one God, one infinite, and but one supreme: There needs but one God, one omnipotent, one all sufficient: What occasion for addition to that which is perfect? Now if upon trial it appear that Baal is that one infinite, omnipotent being, that one supreme lord and all sufficient benefactor, you ought to renounce Jehovah, and cleave to Baal only: But if Jehovah be that one God, Baal is a cheat, and you must have no more to do with him. Note, 1. It is a very ill thing to *halt between God and Baal*. "In reconcilable differences (saith Bishop Hall) nothing more safe than indifference both of practice and opinion; but in cases of so necessary hostility, as betwixt God and Baal." *He that is not with God, is against him*. Compare Mark ix. 38, 39. with Matt. xii. 30. The service of God, and the service of sin, the dominion of Christ, and the dominion of our lusts, these are the two thoughts which it is dangerous halting between. Those do so that are unresolved under their conviction; unstable and unsteady in their purposes, promise fair, but do not perform; begin well, but do not hold on; that are inconsistent with themselves, indifferent and lukewarm in that which is good. *Their heart is divided*, Hos. x. 2. whereas God will have all or none. 2. We are fairly put to our choice *whom we will serve*, Josh. xxiv. 15. If we can find one that has more right to us, or will be a better master to us than God, we may take him at our peril. God demands no more from us than he can make out a title to.

The fair proposal of the case which Elijah here makes. The people knew not what to say, they answered him not a word. They could say nothing to justify themselves, and they would say nothing to condemn themselves, but as people confounded let him say what he would.

2. He proposeth to bring the matter to a fair trial; and it was so much the fairer, because Baal had all the external advantages on his side: The king and court were all for Baal; so was the body of the people. The managers of Baal's cause were four hundred and fifty men, fat and well fed, *ver. 22. besides four hundred more their supporters or seconds*, *ver. 19.* The manager of God's cause was but one man, lately a poor exile; hardly kept from starving; so that God's cause has nothing to support it but its own right. However it is put to this experiment; Let each side prepare a sacrifice, and pray to its God, and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God; if neither did, let them turn atheist; if both, let them continue to *halt between two*. Elijah doubtless, had a special commission from God to put it to this, else he had tempted God and affronted religion; but the case was extraordinary, and the judgment upon it would be of use, not only then but in all ages. It is an instance of the courage of Elijah, that he durst stand alone in the cause of God against such powers and numbers; and the issue encourages all God's witnesses and advocates never to fear the face of man. Elijah doth not say, The God that answers by water, though that was the thing the country needed, but that *answers by fire, let him be God*, because the atonement was to be made by sacrifice before the judgment could be removed in mercy. The God therefore that has power to pardon sin, and to signify that by consuming the sin-offering, must needs be the God that can relieve us against the calamity. He that can give fire can give rain, see Matt. ix. 2.

3. The people join issue with him: *It is well spoken*, *ver. 23.* They allow the proposal to be fair and unexceptionable. God had used to answer by fire; if Baal cannot do so, let him be cast off for an usurper. They were very desirous to see the experiment tried, and seemed resolved to abide by the issue whatever it should be. They that were firm for God doubted not but it would end to his honour: They that were indifferent were willing to be determined. And Ahab and the prophets of Baal durst not oppose for fear of the people, and hoped that either they could obtain fire from heaven (though they never had yet) and the rather because as some think they worshipped the sun in Baal; or that Elijah could not, because not at the temple, where God used thus to manifest his glory: And if in this trial they could but bring it to a drawn battle, their other advantages would give them the victory. Let it go on therefore to a trial.

4. The prophets of Baal try first but in vain with their god. They covet the precedence, not only for the honour of it, but that if they could but in the least seem to gain their point, Elijah might not be admitted to make the trial. Elijah allows it them, *ver. 25. gives them the leading for their*

greater confusion; only knowing that the working of Satan is with lying wonders, he takes care to prevent a fraud, he lures to *put no fire under*. Now in their experiment, observe,

1. How importunate and noisy the prophets of Baal were in their applications to him. They got their sacrifice ready; and we may well imagine what a noise four hundred and fifty men made, when they cried as one man, and with all their might, *O Baal, hear us; O Baal, answer us*; as it is in the margin: And this for some hours together longer than Diana's worshippers made their outcry, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*, Acts xix. 34. How senseless, how brutish were they in their addresses to Baal! 1. Like fools they leaped upon the altar, as if they would themselves become sacrifices with their bullock: Or, thus they expressed their great earnestness of mind, *They leaped up and down*, or danced about the altar: so some hoped by their dancing to please their deity, as Herodias did Herod, and so to obtain their request. 2. Like madmen they cut themselves in pieces with knives and lancets, *ver. 28.* for vexation that they were not answered, or in a sort of prophetic fury, hoping to obtain the favour of their God, by offering to him their own blood, when they could not do it with the blood of their bullock. God never required his worshippers thus to honour him; but the service of the devil, though in some instances it pleaseth and pampereth the body, yet in other things it is really cruel to it, as in envy and drunkenness. It seems this was the manner of the worshippers of Baal: God expressly forbade his worshippers to cut themselves, *Deut. xiv. 1.* He insists upon it that we mortify our lusts and corruption; but corporal penances and severities, such as the Papists use, which have no tendency to that, are no pleasure to him: *Who has required these things at your hands?*

2. How sharp Elijah was upon them, *ver. 27.* He stood by them, and patiently heard them for so many hours praying to an idol, yet with secret indignation and disdain; and at noon when the sun was at the hottest, and they too expecting fire, then if ever: he upbraided them with their folly; and notwithstanding the gravity of his office, and the seriousness of the work he had before him, bantered them, *Cry aloud, for he is a god*; a goodly god that cannot be made to hear without all this clamour. Sure you think he is talking or meditating (as the word is) or he is pursuing some deep thoughts, in a brown study (as we say) thinking of somewhat else, and not minding his own matter, when not your credit only, but all his honour lies at stake, and his interest in Israel. His new conquests will be lost, if he do not look about him quickly. Note, The worship of idols is a most ridiculous thing, and it is but justice to represent it so, and expose it to scorn. This will by no means justify those who ridicule the worshippers of God in Christ, because the worship is not performed just in their way.—Baal's prophets were so far from being convinced and put to shame by the just reproach Elijah cast upon them, that it made them the more violent, and act more ridiculously. A deceived heart having turned them aside, they could not deliver their souls, by saying, *Is there not a lie in our right hand?*

3. How deaf Baal was to them. Elijah did not interrupt them, but let them go on till they were tired, and quite despaired of success, which was not till the time of the evening sacrifice, *ver. 29.* During all that time some of them prayed, while others of them prophesied, sang hymns, perhaps to the praise of Baal; or rather encouraged those that were praying to proceed, telling them, Baal would answer them at last, but there was no answer, nor any that regarded. Idols could do neither good nor evil. The prince of the power of the air, if God had permitted him, could have caused fire to come down from heaven on this occasion, and gladly would have done it for the support of his Baal. We find the beast that deceives the world doth it, *Rev. xiii. 13. He maketh fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men*, and so deceiveth them, *ver. 14.* But God would not suffer the devil to do it now, because the trial of his title was put on that issue by consent of parties.

4. Elijah soon obtains from his God an answer by fire. The Baalites are forced to give up their cause, and now it is Elijah's turn to produce his: Let us see if he speed better.

(1.) He fitted up an altar. He would not make use of theirs which had been polluted with their prayers to Baal, but finding the ruins of an altar there, which had formerly been used in the service of the Lord, he chose to repair that, *ver. 30.* to intimate to them that he was not about to introduce any new religion, but to revive the faith and worship of their fathers God, and reduce them to their first love, their first works. He could not bring them to the altar at Jerusalem, unless he could have united the two kingdoms again (which for correction to both God designed should not now be done) therefore by his prophetic authority he builds an altar on mount Carmel, and so owns that which had formerly been built there. When we cannot carry a reformation so far as we would, we must do what we can, and rather comply with some corruptions than not do our utmost towards the extirpation of Baal. He repaired this altar with *twelve stones according to the number of the twelve tribes*, *ver. 31.* Though ten of the tribes were revolted to Baal, he will look upon them as belonging to God still by virtue of the ancient covenant with their fathers: And though those ten were unhappily divided from the other two in civil interest, yet in the worship of the God of Israel they had communion with each other, and they twelve were one. Mention is made of God's calling their father Jacob by the name of Israel, *a prince with God*, *ver. 31.* to shame his degenerate seed, who worshipped a god that they saw could not hear or answer them, and to encourage the prophet who was now to wrestle with God as Jacob did, he also shall be a prince with God, *Psal. xxxiv. 6. Thy face, O Jacob*, *Hos. xii. 4. There he spake with us*.

(2.) Having built his altar in the name of the Lord, *ver. 32.* by direction from him, and with an eye to him, and not for his own honour, he prepared his sacrifice, *ver. 33. Behold the bullock and the wood; but where is the fire?* Gen. xxii. 7. *God will provide himself fire*. If we in sincerity offer our hearts to God, he will by his grace kindle a holy fire in them. Elijah was no priest, nor his attendants Levites; Carmel had neither tabernacle nor temple, it was a great way distant from the ark of the testimony, and the place God had chosen, this was none of the altars that sanctified the gift, yet never was any sacrifice more acceptable to God than this. The particular Levitical institutions were so often dispensed with, as in the time of the Judges, Samuel's time, and now, that one would be tempted to think they were more designed for types to be fulfilled in the evangelical anti-types, than for laws to be fulfilled in the strict observance of them. Their perishing thus in the using, as the apostle speaks of them, *Col. ii. 22.* was to intimate the utter abolishing of them after a while, *Heb. viii. 13.*

(3.) He ordered abundance of water to be poured upon his altars which he had prepared a trench for the reception of, *ver. 32.* and some think made the altar hollow. Twelve barrels of water (probably sea water, for the sea was near, and so much fresh water in this time of drought, was too precious for him to be so prodigal of) thrice four he poured upon his sacrifice to prevent the suspicion of any fire under; for if there had been any this would have put it out; and to make the expected miracle the more illustrious.

(4.) He then solemnly addressed himself to God by prayer before his altar, humbly beseeching him to turn to ashes his burnt-offering, as the phrase

and when they denied that they knew any thing of him, he would not believe them, unless they swore it, and, as should seem, promised likewise upon oath, that if ever they found him among them they would discover him and deliver him up.—It should seem, he made this diligent search for him, not so much that he might punish him for what he had done in denouncing the judgment, as that he might oblige him to undo it again, by recalling the sentence, because he had said it should be *according to his word*; having such an opinion of him as men foolishly conceive of witches, that if they can but compel them to bless that which they have bewitched, it will be well again, or such as the king of Moab had of Balaam: I incline to this, because we find when they came together, Elijah knowing what Ahab wanted him for, presently appointed him to meet him on mount Carmel, and Ahab complied with the appointment, though Elijah took such a way to revoke the sentence, and bless the land, as perhaps he little thought of.

2. God at length ordered Elijah to present himself to Ahab, because the time was now come when he would *send rain upon the earth*, ver. 1. or rather *upon the land*; above two years he had lain hid with the widow of Zarephath, after he had been concealed one year by the brook Chereth; so that the third of his sojourning there here spoken of, ver. 1. was the fourth of the famine, which lasted in all three years and six months, as we find, *Luke iv. 45. James v. 17.* Such was Elijah's zeal no doubt against the idolatry of Baal, and such his compassion to his people, that he thought it long to be thus confined to a corner, yet he appeared not till God bid him, *Go shew thyself to Ahab*, for now thine hour is come, even the time to favour Israel. Note, It bodes well to any people when God calls his ministers out of their corners, and bids them shew themselves, a sign he will *give rain on the earth*, however we may the better dispense with the bread of affliction while *our eyes see our teachers*, Isa. xxx. 20, 21.

3. Elijah first surrendered, or rather discovered himself to Obadiah. He knew by the Spirit where to meet him, and we are here told what passed between them.

1. Obadiah saluted him with great respect, fell on his face, and humbly asked, *Art thou my Lord Elijah?* ver. 7. As he had shewed the tenderness of a father to the sons of the prophets, so he shewed the reverence of a son to this father of the prophets; and by this made it appear that he did indeed *fear God greatly*, that he did honour to one that was his extraordinary ambassador, and had a great interest in heaven.

2. Elijah in answer to him. (1.) Transfers the title of honour he gave him to Ahab; call him my lord, not me: that is a fitter title for a prince than a prophet, *who seeks not honour from men*. Prophets should be called seers, and shepherds, and watchmen, and ministers rather than lords; as those that mind duty more than dominion. (2.) He bids Obadiah go tell the king that he was there to speak with him. *Tell my lord, behold Elijah is forth-coming*, ver. 8. He would have the king know before, that it might not be a surprize to him, and that he might be sure it was the prophet's own act to present himself to him.

3. Obadiah begs to be excused from carrying this message to Ahab, for it might prove as much as his neck was worth. (1.) He tells Elijah what great search Ahab had made for him, and how much his heart was upon it to find him out, ver. 10. (2.) He takes it for granted that Elijah would again withdraw, ver. 12. *The spirit of the Lord shall carry thee*, (as it is likely he had done sometimes when Ahab thought he had been sure of him) *whither I know not*. See 2 Kings ii. 16. He thought Elijah was not in good earnest, when he bid him tell Ahab where he was, but intended only to expose the impotency of his malice; for he knew Ahab was not worthy to receive any kindness from the prophet, and it was not fit the prophet should receive any diskindness from him. (3.) He is sure Ahab would be so enraged at the disappointment, that he would put him to death for making a fool of him, or for not laying hands on Elijah himself when he had him in his reach, ver. 12. tyrants and persecutors in their passion are often unreasonably outrageous, even towards their friends and confidants. 4. He pleads that he did not deserve to be thus exposed and put in peril of his life, *What have I sinned?* ver. 9. Nay, ver. 13. *Was it not told my Lord how I hid the prophets?* He mentions this not in pride or ostentation, but to convince Elijah, that though he was Ahab's servant, he was not in his interest, and therefore deserved not to be banteted as one of the tools of his persecution. He that had protected so many prophets, he hoped, should not have his own life hazarded by so great a prophet. 4. Elijah satisfies him that he might with safety deliver this message to Ahab, by assuring him with an oath, that he would this very day present himself to Ahab, ver. 15. Let but Obadiah know that he spoke seriously, and really intended it, and he will make no scruple to carry the message to Ahab. Elijah swears by the *Lord of hosts*, who has all power in his hands, and was therefore able to protect his servant against all the powers of hell and earth.

5. Notice is hereby soon brought to Ahab, that Elijah had sent him a challenge to meet him immediately at such a place, and Ahab accepts the challenge, *he went to meet Elijah*, ver. 16. We may suppose it a great surprize to Ahab to hear that Elijah, whom he had so long sought, and not found, was now found without seeking. He went in quest of grass, and finds him from whose word at God's mouth he must expect rain. Yet his guilty conscience gives him little reason to hope for it, but rather to fear some other more dreadful judgment. Had he by his spies surprised Elijah, he would have triumphed over him, but now he was thus surprised by him, we may suppose he even trembled to look him in the face; hated him, and yet feared, as Herod did John.

17. ¶ And it came to pass when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art thou he that troubleth Israel?*

18. And he answered, I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim. 19. Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. 20. So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.

We have here the meeting between Ahab and Elijah; as ill a king as ever the world was plagued with, and as good a prophet as ever the church was blessed with.

1. Ahab, like himself, basely accuseth Elijah; dares not strike him, remembering that Jeroboam's hand was withered when it was stretched out against a prophet, but gives him ill language, which was no less an affront to him that sent him. It is a very coarse compliment with which he accosts him at the first word, *Art thou he that troubled Israel?* ver. 17. How unlike was this to that with which his servant Obadiah saluted him, ver. 7. *Art thou my lord Elijah?* Obadiah feared God greatly; Ahab had sold himself

to work wickedness, and both discovered their character by the manner of their address to the prophet. One may guess how people stand affected to God, by observing how they stand affected to his people and ministers. Elijah now came to bring blessings to Israel, tidings of the return of the rain; yet he is thus affronted. Had it been true that he was the *troubler of Israel*, Ahab as king had been obliged to animadvert upon him. These are those who trouble Israel by their wickedness whom the conservator of the public peace are concerned to enquire after: But it was utterly false concerning Elijah; so far was he from being an enemy to Israel's warfare that he was the stay of it, *the chariots and horsemen of Israel*. Note, It has been the lot of the best and most useful men to be called and counted the troublers of the land, and to be run upon, and run down as public grievances. Even Christ and his apostles were thus misrepresented. *Acts xvii. 6.*

2. Elijah, like himself, boldly returned the charge upon the king, and proved it upon him, that he was the *troubler of Israel*, ver. 18. Elijah is not the Achan, *I have not troubled Israel*, have neither done them any wrong, nor designed them any hurt. They that procure God's judgments do the mischief, not he that foretells them only, and gives warning of them that the nation may repent and prevent them. *I would have healed Israel, but they would not be healed*. Ahab is the Achan, the troubler who follows Baalim those accursed things. Nothing creates more trouble to a land than the impiety and profaneness of princes and their families.

3. As one having authority immediately from the King of kings, he orders a convention of the states to be forthwith summoned to meet at mount Carmel, where there had been an altar built to God, ver. 30. Probably on that mountain they had an eminent high place, where formerly the pure worship of God had been kept up as well as it could be any where but at Jerusalem. Thither all Israel must come to give Elijah the meeting, and the prophets of Baal who were dispersed all the country over, with those of the groves that were Jezebel's domestic chaplains, must there make their personal appearance.

4. Ahab issues out writs accordingly for the convening of this great assembly, ver. 20. either because he feared Elijah, and durst not oppose him; Saul stood in awe of Samuel more than of God: Or because he hoped Elijah would bless the land, and speak the word that they might have rain, upon those terms they would be all at his beck. Those that slighted and hated his counsels would gladly be beholden to him for his prayers. Now God made those who said they were Jews and were not, but were of the synagogue of Satan, to come, and in effect to the worship of his feet, and to know that God had loved him, Rev. iii. 9.

21. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. 22. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. 23. Let them therefore give us two bullocks, and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under, and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: 24. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. 25. And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first: for ye are many: and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. 26. And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal, from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. 27. And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, Cry aloud, for he is a god, either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. 28. And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. 29. And it came to pass, when mid-day was past, that they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. 30. And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him: and he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. 31. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying, Israel shall be thy name. 32. And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. 33. And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. 34. And he said, Do it the second time; And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time: And they did it the third time. 35. And the water ran round about the altar, and he filled the trench also with water. 36. And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day, that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. 37. Hear me, O LORD,

LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. 38. Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt-sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water, that was in the trench. 39. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD he is the God: the LORD, he is the God. 40. And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal, let not one of them escape: and they took them; and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

Ahab and the people expected that Elijah should in this solemn assembly *blest the land*, and pray for rain, but he has other work to do first: The people must be brought to repent and reform, and then they may look for the removal of the judgment, but not till then. This is the right method; God will first *prepare our heart*, and then *cause his ear to hear*; will first *turn us to him*, and then *turn to us*, Psalm x. 17. lxxx. 3. Deserters must not look for God's favour till they return to their allegiance. Elijah might have looked for rain seventy times seven times, and not have seen it, if he had not thus begun his work at the right end.

Three years and half's famine would not bring them back to God, Elijah will endeavour to convince their judgments; and no doubt by special warrant and direction from heaven, he put the controversy between God and Baal upon a public trial. It was great condescension in God, that he would suffer to plain a case to be disputed; and would permit Baal to be a competitor with him; but thus God would have every mouth to be stopped, all flesh to become silent before him. God's cause is so uncontestedly just, that it needs not fear to have the evidences of its equity searched into and weighed.

1. Elijah reproves the people for mixing the worship of God, and the worship of Baal together. Not only some Israelites worshipped God, and others Baal, but the same Israelites sometimes worshipped one, and sometimes the other. This he calls, *ver. 21. Halting between two opinions, or thoughts.* They worshipped God to please the prophets, but worshipped Baal to please Jezebel, and curry favour at court. They thought to trim the matter, and play on both sides, as the Samaritans, 2 Kings xvii. 33. Now Elijah shews them the absurdity of this; he doth not insist in their relation to Jehovah. Is he not yours, and the God of your fathers, but Baal the God of the Sidonians, and will a nation change their God? Jer. ii. 11. No, he waves the prescription, and enters upon the merits of the cause: there can be but one God, one infinite, and but one supreme: There needs but one God, one omnipotent, one all sufficient: What occasion for addition to that which is perfect? Now if upon trial it appear that Baal is that one infinite, omnipotent being, that one supreme lord and all sufficient benefactor, you ought to renounce Jehovah, and cleave to Baal only: But if Jehovah be that one God, Baal is a cheat, and you must have no more to do with him. Note, 1. It is a very ill thing to *halt between God and Baal.* "In reconcileable differences (saith Bishop Hall) nothing more safe than indifference both of practice and opinion; but in cases of 'so necessary hostility, as betwixt God and Baal.' He that is not with God, is against him. Compare Mark ix. 38, 39. with Matt. xii. 30. The service of God, and the service of sin, the dominion of Christ, and the dominion of our lusts, these are the two thoughts which it is dangerous halting between. Those do so that are unresolved under their conviction; unstable and unsteady in their purposes, promise fair, but do not perform; begin well, but do not hold on; that are inconsistent with themselves, indifferent and lukewarm in that which is good. *Their heart is divided*, Hos. x. 2. whereas God will have all or none. 2. We are fairly put to our choice *whom we will serve*, Josh. xxiv. 15. If we can find one that has more right to us, or will be a better master to us than God, we may take him at our peril. God demands no more from us than he can make out a title to.

The fair proposal of the case which Elijah here makes. The people knew not what to say, they *answered him not a word*. They could say nothing to justify themselves, and they would say nothing to condemn themselves, but as people confounded let him say what he would.

2. He proposeth to bring the matter to a fair trial; and it was so much the fairer, because Baal had all the external advantages on his side: The king and court were all for Baal; so was the body of the people. The managers of Baal's cause were four hundred and fifty men, fat and well fed, *ver. 22.* besides four hundred more their supporters or seconds, *ver. 19.* The manager of God's cause was but one man, lately a poor exile; hardly kept from starving; so that God's cause has nothing to support it but its own right. However it is put to this experiment; Let each side prepare a sacrifice, and pray to its God, and *the God that answereth by fire, let him be God*; if neither did, let them turn atheist; if both, let them continue to *halt between two.* Elijah doubtless, had a special commission from God to put it to this, else he had tempted God and affronted religion; but the case was extraordinary, and the judgment upon it would be of use, not only then but in all ages. It is an instance of the courage of Elijah, that he durst stand alone in the cause of God against such powers and numbers; and the issue encourages all God's witnesses and advocates never to fear the face of man. Elijah doth not say, The God that answers by water, though that was the thing the country needed, but that *answers by fire, let him be God*, because the atonement was to be made by sacrifice before the judgment could be removed in mercy. The God therefore that has power to pardon sin, and to signify that by consuming the sin-offering, must needs be the God that can relieve us against the calamity. He that can give fire can give rain, see Matt. ix. 2.

3. The people join issue with him: *It is well spoken*, *ver. 25.* They allow the proposal to be fair and unexceptionable. God had used to answer by fire: if Baal cannot do so, let him be cast off for an usurper. They were very desirous to see the experiment tried, and seemed resolved to abide by the issue whatever it should be. They that were firm for God doubted not but it would end to his honour: They that were indifferent were willing to be determined. And Ahab and the prophets of Baal durst not oppose for fear of the people, and hoped that either they could obtain fire from heaven (though they never had yet) and the rather because as some think they worshipped the sun in Baal; or that Elijah could not, because not at the temple, where God used thus to manifest his glory: And if in this trial they could but bring it to a drawn battle, their other advantages would give them the victory. Let it go on therefore to a trial.

4. The prophets of Baal try first but in vain with their god. They covet the precedency, not only for the honour of it, but that if they could but in the least seem to gain their point, Elijah might not be admitted to make the trial. Elijah allows it them, *ver. 25.* gives them the leading for their

greater confusion; only knowing that the working of Satan is with lying wonders, he takes care to prevent a fraud, be sure to *put no fire under*. Now in their experiment, observe,

1. How importunate and noisy the prophets of Baal were in their applications to him. They got their sacrifice ready; and we may well imagine what a noise four hundred and fifty men made, when they cried as one man, and with all their might, *O Baal, hear us; O Baal, answer us*; as it is in the margin: And this for some hours together longer than Diana's worshippers made their outcry, *Great is Diana of the Ephesians*, Acts xix. 34. How senseless, how brutish were they in their addresses to Baal! 1. Like fools they *leaped upon the altar*, as if they would themselves become sacrifices with their bullock: O, thus they expressed their great earnestness of mind, *They leaped up and down*, or danced about the altar: so some hoped by their dancing to please their deity, as Herodias did Herod, and so to obtain their request. 2. Like madmen they *cut themselves in pieces with knives and lancets*, *ver. 28.* for vexation that they were not answered, or in a sort of prophetic fury, hoping to obtain the favour of their God, by offering to him their own blood, when they could not do it with the blood of their bullock. God never required his worshippers thus to honour him; but the service of the devil, though in some instances it pleaseth and pampereth the body, yet in other things it is really cruel to it, as in envy and drunkenness. It seems this was the manner of the worshippers of Baal: God expressly forbade his worshippers to cut themselves, *Deut. xiv. 1.* He insists upon it that we mortify our lusts and corruption; but corporal penances and severities, such as the Papists use, which have no tendency to that, are no pleasure to him: *Who has required these things at your hands?*

2. How sharp Elijah was upon them, *ver. 27.* He stood by them, and patiently heard them for so many hours praying to an idol, yet with secret indignation and disdain; and at noon when the sun was at the hottest, and they too expecting fire, then if ever: he upbraided them with their folly; and notwithstanding the gravity of his office, and the seriousness of the work he had before him, bantered them, *Cry aloud, for he is a god*; a goodly god that cannot be made to hear without all this clamour. Sure you think he is talking or meditating (as the word is) or he is pursuing some deep thoughts, in a brown study (as we say) thinking of somewhat else, and not minding his own matter, when not your credit only, but all his honour lies at stake, and his interest in Israel. His new conquests will be lost, if he do not look about him quickly. Note, The worship of idols is a most ridiculous thing, and it is but justice to represent it so, and expose it to scorn. This will by no means justify those who ridicule the worshippers of God in Christ, because the worship is not performed just in their way.—Baal's prophets were so far from being convinced and put to shame by the just reproach Elijah cast upon them, that it made them the more violent, and act more ridiculously. A deceived heart having turned them aside, they could not deliver their souls, by saying, *Is there not a lie in our right hand?*

3. How deaf Baal was to them. Elijah did not interrupt them, but let them go on till they were tired, and quite despaired of success, which was not till the time of the evening sacrifice, *ver. 29.* During all that time some of them prayed, while others of them prophesied, sang hymns, perhaps to the praise of Baal; or rather encouraged those that were praying to proceed, telling them, Baal would answer them at last, but there was no answer, nor any that regarded. Idols could do neither good nor evil. The prince of the power of the air, if God had permitted him, could have caused fire to come down from heaven on this occasion, and gladly would have done it for the support of his Baal. We find the beast that deceives the world doth it, *Rev. xiii. 13.* He maketh fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men, and so deceiveth them, *ver. 14.* But God would not suffer the devil to do it now, because the trial of his title was put on that issue by consent of parties.

4. Elijah soon obtains from his God an answer by fire. The Baalites are forced to give up their cause, and now it is Elijah's turn to produce his: Let us see if he speed better.

(1.) He fitted up an altar. He would not make use of theirs which had been polluted with their prayers to Baal, but finding the ruins of an altar there, which had formerly been used in the service of the Lord, he chose to repair that, *ver. 30.* to intimate to them that he was not about to introduce any new religion, but to revive the faith and worship of their fathers God, and reduce them to their first love, their first works. He could not bring them to the altar at Jerusalem, unless he could have united the two kingdoms again (which for correction to both God designed should not now be done) therefore by his prophetic authority he builds an altar on mount Carmel, and so owns that which had formerly been built there. When we cannot carry a reformation so far as we would, we must do what we can, and rather comply with some corruptions than not do our utmost towards the extirpation of Baal. He repaired this altar with *twelve stones according to the number of the twelve tribes*, *ver. 31.* Though ten of the tribes were revolted to Baal, he will look upon them as belonging to God still by virtue of the ancient covenant with their fathers: And though those ten were unhappily divided from the other two in civil interest, yet in the worship of the God of Israel they had communion with each other, and they twelve were one. Mention is made of God's calling their father Jacob by the name of Israel, a *prince with God*, *ver. 31.* to shame his degenerate seed, who worshipped a god that they saw could not hear or answer them, and to encourage the prophet who was now to wrestle with God as Jacob did, he also shall be a prince with God, *Psal. xxxiv. 6.* Thy face, O Jacob, Hos. xii. 4. *There he spake with us.*

(2.) Having built his altar in the name of the Lord, *ver. 32.* by direction from him, and with an eye to him, and not for his own honour, he prepared his sacrifice, *ver. 33.* Behold the bullock and the wood; but where is the fire? Gen. xxii. 7. *God will provide himself fire.* If we in sincerity offer our hearts to God, he will by his grace kindle a holy fire in them. Elijah was no priest, nor his attendants Levites; Carmel had neither tabernacle nor temple, it was a great way distant from the ark of the testimony, and the place God had chosen, this was none of the altars that sanctified the gift, yet never was any sacrifice more acceptable to God than this. The particular Levitical institutions were so often dispensed with, as in the time of the Judges, Samuel's time, and now, that one would be tempted to think they were more designed for types to be fulfilled in the evangelical anti-types, than for laws to be fulfilled in the strict observance of them. Their perishing thus in the using, as the apostle speaks of them, *Col. ii. 22.* was to intimate the utter abolishing of them after a while, *Heb. viii. 13.*

(3.) He ordered abundance of water to be poured upon his altars which he had prepared a trench for the reception of, *ver. 32.* and some think made the altar hollow. Twelve barrels of water (probably sea water, for the sea was near, and so much fresh water in this time of drought, was too precious for him to be so prodigal of) thrice four he poured upon his sacrifice to prevent the suspicion of any fire under; for if there had been any this would have put it out; and to make the expected miracle the more illustrious.

(4.) He then solemnly addressed himself to God by prayer before his altar, humbly beseeching him to turn to ashes his burnt-offering, as the phrase

phrase is, *Psalms* xx. 3. and so to testify his acceptance of it. His prayer is not long, for he used no vain repetitions, nor thought he should be heard for his much speaking: but it is very grave and composed, and speaks his mind calm and sedate, and far from the hearts and disorders that Baal's prophets were in, *ver.* 36, 37. Though he was not at the place appointed, he chose the appointed time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, thereby to testify his communion with the altars at Jerusalem. Though he expected an answer by fire, yet he came near to the altar with boldness, and feared not that fire. He addressed himself to God, as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, acting faith on God's ancient covenant, and minding the people too (for prayer may prevail) of their relation both to God, and to the patriarchs. Two things he pleads here, (1.) The glory of God; Lord, hear me, and answer me, that it may be known (for it is now by the most denied or forgotten) that thou art God in Israel, to whom alone the homage and devotion of Israel is due; and that I am thy servant, and do all I have done, am doing, and shall do, as thine agent, at thy word, and not to gratify any humour or passion of my own. Thou employest me, Lord, make it appear that dost so, see *Numb.* xvi. 28, 29. Elijah sought not his own glory but in subserviency to God's, and for his own necessary vindication. 2. The edification of the people, that they may know that thou art the Lord, and may experience thy grace, turning their hearts, by this miracle as a means, back again to thee, in order to thy return in a way of mercy to them.

(3.) God immediately answered him by fire, *ver.* 38. Elijah's God was neither talking nor pursuing, needed not to be either awakened or quickened, while he was yet speaking, the fire of the Lord fell, and not only, as at other times, (*Lev.* ix. 24. *1 Chron.* xxi. 26. *2 Chron.* vii. 1.) consumed the sacrifice and the word, in token of God's acceptance to the offering, but licked up all the water in the trench, exhaling that, and drawing it up as a vapour, in order to the intended rain, which was to be the fruit of this sacrifice and prayer, more than the product of natural causes. Compare *Psalms* cxxxv. 7. He causeth vapours to ascend, and maketh lightnings for the rain; for this rain he did both. Those who fall as victims to the fire of God's wrath, no water can shelter them from it, no more than briars or thorns, *Isa.* xxviii. 4, 5. But this was not all, to complete the miracle, the fire consumed the stones of the altar, and the very dust, to shew that it was no ordinary fire, and perhaps to intimate, that though God accepted this occasional sacrifice from this altar, yet for the future they ought to demolish all the altars on their high-places; and for their constant sacrifices make use of that at Jerusalem only. Moses's altar and Solomon's were consecrated by the fire from heaven, but this was destroyed, because no more to be used. We may well imagine what a terror the fire struck on guilty Ahab, and all the worshippers of Baal, and how they fled from it as far and as fast as they could, saying, *Let it consume us also*, alluding to *Numb.* xvi. 34.

Lastly, What was the result of this fair trial. The prophets of Baal had failed in their proof, and could give no evidence at all, to make out their pretensions on the behalf of their God, but were perfectly non-suited; Elijah had by the most convincing and undeniable evidence proved his claims on the behalf of the God of Israel.

And now, 1. The people as the jury give in their verdict upon the trial, and they are all agreed in it; the case is so plain they need not go from the bar to consider of their verdict, or consult about it, they fell on their faces, and all as one man said, *Jehovah, he is the God*, and not Baal; we are convinced and satisfied of it, *Jehovah, he is the God*, *ver.* 39. From whence one would think they should have inferred, if he be the God, he shall be our God, and we will serve him only, as *Isa.* xxiv. 24. Some, we hope, had their hearts thus turned back, but the generality of them were convinced only, not converted; yielded to the truth of God, that he is the God, but consented not to his covenant that he should be theirs. Blessed are they that have not seen what they saw, and yet have believed, and been wrought upon by it, more than they that saw it. Let it for ever be looked upon as a point adjudged against all pretenders, for it was carried upon a full hearing against one of the most daring and threatening competitors that ever the God of Israel was affronted by, that *Jehovah, he is the God*, God alone.

2. The prophets of Baal, as criminals, are seized, condemned and executed according to law, *ver.* 40. If Jehovah be the true God, Baal is a false God to whom these Israelites had revolted, and seduced others to the worship of him, and therefore by the express law of God they were to be put to death, *Deut.* xiii. 1—11. There needed no proof of the fact, all Israel were witnesses of it, and therefore Elijah (acted still by an extraordinary commission, which is not to be drawn into a precedent,) orders them all to be slain immediately as the troublers of the land, and Ahab himself is so terrified for the present with the fire from heaven, that he dares not oppose it. These were the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, the four hundred prophets of the groves (who some think were Sidonians) though summoned, *ver.* 19. yet as it should seem did not attend, and so escaped this execution, which fair escape perhaps Ahab and Jezebel thought themselves happy in; but it proved they were reserved to be the instruments of Ahab's destruction some time after by encouraging him to go up to Ramoth-Gilead, *chap.* xxii. 6.

41. ¶ And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink, for there is a sound of abundance of rain, 42. So Ahab went up to eat and to drink, and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel, and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees. 43. And said to his servant, Go up now, look towards the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. 44. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. 45. And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel. 46. And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah; and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Israel being thus far reformed, that they had acknowledged the Lord to be God, and had consented to the execution of Baal's prophets, that they might not seduce them any more, though it was far short of a thorough reformation, yet was so far accepted, that God thereupon opened the bottles

of heaven, and poured out blessings upon his land, that very evening (as it should seem) that they did this good work, which should have confirmed them in their reformation, see *Hag.* ii. 18, 19.

1. Elijah sends Ahab to eat and drink, for joy that God had now accepted his works, and rain was coming, see *Eccles.* ix. 7. Ahab had continued fasting all day, either religiously, it being a day of prayer; or for want of leisure, it being a day of great expectation; but now let him, eat and drink, for though others perceive no sign of it, Elijah by faith hears the sound of abundance of rain, *ver.* 41. God revealeth his secrets to his servants the prophets; and yet without a revelation we may foresee, that when man's judgments run down like a river, God's mercy will. Rain is the river of God, *Psalms* lxxv. 9.

2. He himself retires to pray, (for though God has promised rain, he must ask it, *Zech.* x. 1.) and to give thanks for God's answer by fire, now hoping for an answer by water. What he said we are not told: But, (1.) He withdrew himself to an odd place, to the top of Carmel, which was very high, and very private. Hence we read of those that hide themselves in the top of Carmel, *Amos* ix. 3. There he would be alone. Those who art called to appear and act in public for God, must yet find time to be private with him, and keep up their converse with him in solitude. There he set himself as it were upon his watch tower, like the prophet, *Hab.* ii. 1. (2.) He puts himself into a very odd posture; he cast himself down on his knees upon the earth, in token of humility, reverence and importunity, and put his face between his knees, i. e. bowed his head so low, that it touched his knees, thus abasing himself in the sense of his own meanness now God had thus honoured him.

3. He orders his servant to bring him notice as soon as he discerned a cloud arising out of the sea, the Mediterranean sea, which he had a large prospect of from the top of Carmel. The sailors at this day call it Cape Carmel. Six times his servant goes to the point of the hill, and sees nothing, brings no good news to his master, yet Elijah continues praying, will not be diverted so far as to go and see with his own eyes, but still sends his servant to see if he could discover any hopeful cloud, while he keeps his mind close and intent in prayer, and abides by it, as one that had taken up his father Jacob's resolution, *I will not let thee go, except thou bless me*. Note, Though the answer of our fervent and believing supplications does not come presently, yet we must continue instant in prayer, and not faint or give over, for at the end it shall speak and not lie.

4. A little cloud at length appears, no bigger than a man's hand, which presently overspread the heavens and waters the earth, *ver.* 44, 45. Great blessings often arise from small beginnings, and showers of plenty from a cloud of a span-long. Let us therefore never despise the day of small things, but hope and wait for great things from it. This was not as a morning cloud, which passeth away, though Israel's goodness was so, but one that produced a plentiful rain, *Psalms* lxxviii. 9. and an earnest of more.

5. Elijah hereupon hastens Ahab home, and attends him himself. Ahab rode in his chariot at ease and in state, *ver.* 45. Elijah run on foot before him. If Ahab had paid the respect to Elijah that he deserved, he should have taken him into his chariot as the eunuch did Philip, that he might honour him before the elders of Israel, and confer with him farther about the reformation of the kingdom: But his corruptions got the better of his convictions, and he was glad to get clear of him, as Felix of Paul, when he dismissed him, and adjourned his conference with him to a more convenient season. But since Ahab invites him not to ride with him, he will run before him, *ver.* 46. as one of his footmen, that he might not seem to be lifted up with the great honour God had put upon him, or to abate in his civil respects to his prince, though he reproved him faithfully. God's ministers should make it appear, that how great soever they look when they deliver God's messages, yet they are far from affecting worldly grandeur: Let them leave that to the kings of the earth.

C H A P. XIX.

We left Elijah at the entrance of Jezreel, still appearing publicly, and all the people's eyes upon him. In this chapter we have him again absconding, and driven into obscurity, at a time when he could ill have been spared: but we are to look upon it as a punishment to Israel for the insincerity and inconstancy of their reformation. When people will not learn, it is just with God to remove their teachers into corners. Now observe, (1.) How he was driven into banishment by the malice of Jezebel his sworn enemy, *ver.* 1—3. (2.) How he was met in his banishment by the favour of God, his covenant friend. 1. How he fed him, *ver.* 4—8. 2. How he conversed with him, and manifested himself to him, *ver.* 9, 11, 12, 13. heard his complaint, *ver.* 10—14, directed him what to do, *ver.* 15, 16, 17. and encouraged him, *ver.* 18. 3. How his hands were strengthened at his return out of banishment, by the joining of Elisha with him, *ver.* 19—21.

1. AND Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal, how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. 2. Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, so let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them, by tomorrow about this time. 3. And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. 4. ¶ But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a juniper-tree: and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is enough, now, O LORD, take away my life: for I am not better than my fathers. 5. And as he lay and slept under a juniper-tree, behold, then, an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. 6. And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head: and he did eat, and drink, and laid him down again. 7. And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee. 8. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb the mount of God.

One would have expected, after such a public and sensible manifestation of the glory of God, and such a clear decision of the controversy depending between him and Baal, to the honour of Elijah, the confusion of Baal's prophets, and the universal satisfaction of the people; after they had seen both fire and water come from heaven at the prayer of Elijah, and both in mercy to them; the one as it signified the acceptance of their offering, the other as it refreshed their inheritance, which was weary, that now they should all as one man have returned to the worship of the God of Israel, and taken Elijah for their guide and oracle, that he should from henceforward have been prime minister of state, and his directions laws both to king and kingdom. But it is quite otherwise; he is neglected whom God honoured; no respect is paid him, no care taken of him, nor any use made of him; but on the contrary, the land of Israel, to which he had been, and might have been, so great a blessing, is soon made too hot for him.

1. Ahab incensed Jezebel against him. That queen-consort, it seems, was in effect queen-regent, as she was afterwards when she was queen-dowager; an imperious woman that managed king and kingdom, and did what she would. Ahab's conscience would not let him persecute Elijah, some remains he had in him of the good and spirit of an Israelite, which tied his hands, but he told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, *ver. 1.* not to convince but to exasperate her. It is not said he told her what God had done, but what Elijah had done, as if he by some spell or charm had brought fire from heaven, and the hand of the Lord had not been in it. Especially he represented to her, as that which would make her outrageous against him, that he had slain the prophets; the prophets of Baal he calls the prophets, as if none but they were worthy of the name. Those were they his heart was upon, and he aggravates the slaying of them as Elijah's crime, without taking notice that it was a just reprisal upon her for killing God's prophets, *chap. xviii. 4.* Those who when they cannot for shame or fear do mischief themselves, yet stir up others to do it, will have it laid to their charge, as if they had themselves done it.

1. Jezebel sent him a threatening message, *ver. 2.* that she had vowed and sworn to be the death of him within twenty-four hours. Something diverting her that she could not have it done just now, but she resolves it shall not be long undone. Note, Carnal hearts are hardened and enraged against God by that which should convince and conquer them, and bring them into subjection to him. She swears by her gods many, and raging like one distracted; cursed herself if she slay not him, without any providence of a divine permission. Cruelty and confidence often meet in persecutors. *I will pursue, I will overtake*, *Exod. xv. 9.* But how came she to lend him word of her design, and so to give him an opportunity of making his escape? Did she think him so daring, that he would not flee? Or herself able to prevent it? Or was there a special providence in it, that she should be thus infatuated by her own fury? I am apt to think, though she desired nothing more than his blood, yet at this time she durst not meddle with him, for fear of the people, all counting him a prophet, a great prophet; and therefore sent this message to him purely to frighten him, and get him out of the way for the present, that he might not carry on what he had begun. The backing of her threats with an oath and imprecation, doth not at all prove that she really intended it, but only intended to make him believe it. The gods she swore by could do her no harm.

Elijah hereupon in a great fright fled for his life, it is likely by night, and came to Beersheba, *ver. 3.* Shall we praise him for this? We praise him not. Where was the courage with which he had lately confronted Ahab, and all the prophets of Baal? Nay, which kept him by his sacrifice when the fire of God fell upon it; he that stood undaunted in the midst of the terrors both of heaven and earth, trembles at the impotent menaces of a proud passionate woman, *Lord, what is man!* Great faith is not always alike strong. He could not but know that he might be very serviceable to Israel at this juncture, and had all the reason in the world to depend upon God's protection while he was doing God's work, yet he flies. In his former danger, God had bid him hide himself, *chap. xvii. 3.* therefore he supposed he might do it now.

4. From Beersheba he went forward into the wilderness, that vast howling wilderness, in which the Israelites wandered. Beersheba was so far distance from Jezreel, and within the dominion of so good a king as Jehoshaphat, that he could not but be safe there, yet, as if his fears haunted him, even when he was out of the reach of danger, he cannot rest there, but went a day's journey into the desert. Yet perhaps he retired thither, not so much for his safety as that he might be wholly retired from the world, in order to a more free and intimate communion with God. *He left his servant at Beersheba*, that he might be private in the wilderness, as Abraham left his servants at the bottom of the hill when he went up into the mount to worship God; and as Christ in the garden was withdrawn from his disciples: Or perhaps it was because he would not expose his servant, who was young and tender, to the hardships of the wilderness: that would be putting new wine into old bottles. We ought thus to consider the frame of those who are under our charge, for God considers ours.

5. Being weary with his journey, he grew cross, (like children when they are sleepy) and wished he might die, *ver. 4.* He requested for his life (so it is in the margin) that he might die; for death is life to a good man; the death of the body is the life of the soul. Yet that was not the reason why he wished to die; it was not the deliberate desire of grace, as Paul's to depart and be with Christ, but the passionate wish of his corruption, as Job's. Those that are in this manner forward to die, are not in fittest frame for it. Jezebel has sworn his death, and therefore he in a fret, prays for it, runs from death to death, yet with this difference he wishes to die by the hand of the Lord, whose tender mercies are great, and not to fall into the hands

of man, whose tender mercies are cruel. He would rather die in the wilderness, than as Baal's prophets died, according to Jezebel's threatening, *ver. 2.* lest the worshippers of Baal triumph, and blaspheme the God of Israel, whom they will think themselves too hard for, if they can run down his advocate. He pleads it is enough, I have done enough, and suffered enough, I am weary of living. Those that have made such a happiness in the other world, will soon have enough of this world. He pleads, *I am not better than my fathers*; nor better able to bear those fatigues, and therefore why should I be longer burthened with them than they were? But is this that my Lord Elijah? Can that great and gallant spirit sneak thus? God thus left him to himself, to shew him, that when he was bold and strong, it was in the Lord, and the power of his might, but of himself he was no better than his fathers, or brethren.

6. God by an angel fed him in that wilderness, into the wants and perils of which he had wilfully thrown himself, and in which, if God had not graciously succoured him, he had perished. How much better doth God deal with his forward children than they deserve! Elijah in a pet wished to die; God needed him not, yet designed farther to employ and honour him, and therefore sent an angel to keep him alive. Our case would be bad sometimes, if God should take us at our word, and grant us our foolish passionate requests. Having prayed he might die, he laid down and slept, *ver. 5.* wishing it may be to die in his sleep, and not to wake again; but he is wakened out of his sleep, and finds himself not only well provided for with bread and

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water, *ver. 6.* but, which was more, attended by an angel, who guarded him when he slept, called him to his viands when they were ready for him *ver. 7.* and a second time, *ver. 8.* He needed not complain of the unkindness of men, when it was thus made up by the munificence of angels. Thus provided for, he had reason to think he fared better than the prophets of the groves, that did eat at Jezebel's table. Wherever God's children are, as they are still upon their father's ground, so they are still under their Father's eye and care. They may lose themselves in a wilderness, but God has not left them; there they may look at him and live, and see, them, as Hagar, *Rev. xvi. 13.*

Lastly, he is carried in the strength of his meat to Horeb, the mount of God, *ver. 8.* Thither the Spirit of the Lord led him, probably beyond his own intention, that he might have communion with God in the same place where Moses had, the law that was given by Moses being revived by him. The angel bid him eat the second time, because of the greatness of the journey that was before him, *ver. 7.* Note, God knows what he designs for us, though we do not, what services, what trials, and what take care for us, when we for want of foresight, cannot for ourselves, that we be furnished for them with grace sufficient. He that appoints what the voyage shall be, will victual the ship accordingly. See how many different ways God took to keep Elijah alive; fed him by ravens, which multiplied meals, by an angel, and now to shew that *man lives not by bread alone*; he kept him alive forty days without meat, not resting and sleeping, which might make him the less to crave sustenance, but continually traversing the mazes of the desert, a day for a year of Israel's wandering, yet he neither needs food, nor desires it. The place, no doubt, mimics him of the manna, and encourages him to hope, that God would sustain him here, and in due time bring him hence, as he did Israel, though like him, fretful and distrustful.

9. ¶ And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What dost thou here, Elijah? 10. And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 11. And he said, go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD: but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake: but the LORD was not in the earthquake: 12. And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire, a still small voice. 13. And it was so when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood at the entering in of the cave: and behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What dost thou here, Elijah? 14. And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 15. And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. 16. And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah, shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. 17. And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael, shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu, shall Elisha slay. 18. Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.

Here is, 1. Elijah holed in a cave at mount Horeb, which is called the mount of God, because on it God had formerly manifested his glory. And, perhaps, this was the same cleft or cave of a rock in which Moses was hid when the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed his name, *Exod. xxxiii. 22.* What Elijah proposed to himself in coming to lodge here, I cannot conceive, unless it were either to indulge his melancholy, or to satisfy his curiosity, and assist his faith and devotion with the sight of that famous place where the law was given, and to many great things were done, and hoping to meet with God himself, there where Moses met with him; Or, in token of his abandoning his people Israel, who hated to be reformed; and so it agrees with Jeremiah's wish, *Jer. ix. 2.* *O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people and go from them, for they be all adulterous*; and so it was a bad omen of God's forsaking them. Or, it was because he thought he could not be safe any where else; and to this instance of the hardships this good man was reduced to, the apostle refers, *Heb. xi. 38.* *They wandered in deserts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.*

2. The visit God made him there, and the enquiry he made concerning him; *The word of the Lord came to him.* We cannot go any whither to be out of the reach of God's eye, his arm, and his word. *Whither can I flee from thy Spirit?* *Psal. cxxxix. 7, 8c.* God will take care of his out-casts; and those that for his sake are driven out from among them, he will find and own, and gather with everlasting loving kindness. St. John saw the visions of the Almighty, when he was in banishment in the isle of Patmos, *Rev. i. 9.*

The question God put to him is, *What dost thou here, Elijah?* *ver. 9.* and again, *ver. 13.* This is a reproof, 1. For his fleeing thither. What brings thee so far from home? Dost thou flee from Jezebel? Couldst thou not depend upon almighty power for thy protection? Lay the emphasis upon [thou], *What thou?* So great a man, so great prophet, so famed for resolution, dost thou run thy country, run thy colours thus? This cowardice had been more excusable in another, and not so ill an example. *Should such a man as I am flee?* *Neh. vi. 11.* *How fir-trees if the cedars be thus shaken.* 2. For his fixing here: *What dost thou here in this cave?* Is this a place for a prophet of the Lord to lodge in? Is this a time for such men to

retreat, when the public has such need of them? In Elijah's retirement that God sent him to, *chap. xvii.* he was a blessing to a poor widow at Sarepta, but here he had no opportunity of doing good. Note, It concerns us often to enquire, whether we be in our place, and in the way of our duty. Am I where I should be? Whither God calls me, where my business lies, and where I may be useful?

3. The account he gives to himself in answer to the question put to him, *ver. 10.* and repeated in answer to the same question, *ver. 14.* In which, (1.) He excuses his retreat, and desires it may not be imputed to his want of zeal for reformation, but to his despair of success. For God knew, and his own conscience witnessed for him, that as long as there was any hopes of doing good, he had been *very jealous for the Lord God of hosts*; but now he had laboured in vain, and all his endeavours were to no purpose, he thought it was time to give up the cause, and mourn for what he could not mend, *Abi in cellum & dic, miserere mei.* (2.) He complains of the people, their obstinacy in sin, and the height of impiety they were got to; *the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant*, and that is the reason I have forsaken them; who can stay among them, to see every thing that is sacred, ruined, and run down? This the apostle calls his *making intercession against Israel*, *Rom. xi. 2, 3.* He had often been of choice their advocate, but now is necessitated to be their accuser before God. Thus *Joh. v. 45.* *There is one that accuseth you, even Moses in whom you trust.* Those are truly miserable that have the testimony and prayers of God's prophets against them. (3.) He charges them that they had forsaken God's covenant; though they retained circumcision, the sign and seal of it, yet they had quitted his worship and service, which was the intention of it. Those who neglect God's ordinances, and let fall their communion with him, do really forsake his covenant, and break their league with him. That they had *thrown down his altars*, not only deserted them, and suffered them to go to decay, but in their zeal for the worship of Baal, had wilfully demolished them: The private altar which the prophets of the Lord had, and which good people attended, who could not go up to Jerusalem, and would not worship the calves nor Baal, these separate altars, though breaking in upon the unity of the church, yet being erected and attended by those that sincerely aimed at the glory of God, and served him faithfully, the seeming schismaticalness of them was dispensed with; God owned them for his altars, as well as that at Jerusalem, and the putting of them down is charged upon Israel as a crying sin. But this was not all. *They have slain thy prophets with the sword*, who, it is probable, ministered at those altars. Jezebel, a foreigner did it, *chap. xviii. 4.* but is charged upon the body of the people, because the generality of them were *consenting to their death*, and pleased with it. (4.) He gives the reason why he retired into this desert, and took up his residence in this cave. 1. It was because he could not appear to any purpose: *I only am left*, and have none to second or support me in any good design. They all said, *The Lord he is God*, but not one of them, would stand by me, or offer to shelter me. That point then gained, was perfectly lost again, and Jezebel can do more to debauch them, than I can to reform them. What can one do against thousands? Despair of success hinders many a good enterprise. None is willing to venture alone; forgetting that those are not alone, who have God with them. 2. It was, because he could not appear with any safety; *they seek my life to take it away*, and I had better spend my life in a useless solitude, than lose my life in a fruitless endeavour to reform those that hate to be reformed.

4. God's manifestations of himself to him. Did he come hither to meet with God? he shall find that God will not fail to give him the meeting. Moses was put into the cave, when God's glory passed before him, but Elijah was called out of it, to stand upon the mount before the Lord, *ver. 11.* He *saw no manner of similitude*, so more than Israel did, when God talked to them in Horeb. But, 1. He heard a strong wind, and saw the terrible effects of it, for it rent the mountains, and tore the rocks. That was the trumpet sounded before the judge of heaven and earth, by his angels, whom he makes spirits, or winds, *Psal. civ. 4.* sounded so loud, that the earth not only rang, but rent again. 2. He felt the shock of an earthquake. 3. He saw an eruption of fire, *ver. 12.* These were to usher in the designed manifestation of the divine glory, angels being employed in them; whom he maketh a flame of fire, and who, as his ministers, march before him, to prepare in this desert a high way for our God. But, 4. At last he perceived a still small voice, in which the Lord was, i. e. by which he spoke to him, and not out of the wind, or the earthquake, or the fire: Those struck an awe upon him, awakened his attention, and obliged him to humility and reverence, but God chose to make known his mind to him in soft whispers, not in those dreadful sounds. Which when he perceived. (1.) *He wrapt his face in his mantle*, as one afraid to look upon the glory of God, and apprehensive that it would dazzle his eyes, and overcome him. The angels cover their faces before God, in token of reverence, *Isa. vi. 2.* Elijah hid his face, for shame, that he should be such a coward to outrun his duty, when he had such a God of power to stand by him in it. The wind, and earthquake, and fire, did not make him cover his face, but the still voice did. Gracious souls are more affected by the tender mercies of the Lord, than by his terrors. (2.) He stood at the entrance of the cave, ready to hear what God had to say to him. This manner and method of God's manifesting himself here at mount Horeb, seems to refer to the discoveries God formerly made of himself at this place to Moses. 1. That there was a tempest, an earthquake and fire, *Heb. xii. 18.* but when God would shew Moses his glory, he proclaimed his goodness; and so here, *He was the word*, was in the still small voice. 2. Then the law was thus given to Israel, with the appearances of terror first, and then with a voice of words; and Elijah being now called to revive that law, especially the two first commandments of it, is here taught how to manage it; he must not only awaken and terrify the people with amazing signs, like the earthquake and fire, but he must endeavour with a still small voice, to convince and persuade them, and not out-run them when he should do that. Faith comes by hearing the word of God, miracles do but make way for it. 3. Then God spake to his people with terror, but in the gospel of Christ, which was to be introduced by the spirit and power of Elias, he would speak by a still small voice, the dread of which should not make us afraid, see *Heb. xii. 18, &c.*

4. The orders God gives him what to do. He repeated the questions he had put to him before, *What dost thou here?* This is not a place for thee now. Elijah gives the same answer, *ver. 14.* complains of Israel's apostasy from God, and the ruin of religion among them. To this God gives him a reply. When he wished he might die, *ver. 4.* God answered him not according to his folly, but was so far from letting him die, that he not only kept him alive then, but provided that he should never die, but be translated. But when he complained of his discouragement (and whither should God's prophets go with their complaints of that kind, but to their master) God gave him an answer. He sends him back with directions to appoint Hazael king of Syria, *ver. 15.* Jehu king of Israel, and Elisha his successor in the eminency of the prophetic office, *ver. 16.* which is intended as a prediction, that by these God would chastise the degenerate Israelites, plead his own cause among them, and avenge the quarrel of his covenant, *ver. 17.* Elijah complained that the wickedness of Israel was un-

punished, the judgment of famine was too gentle, and had not reclaimed them; it was removed before they were reformed. *I have been jealous*, saith he, for God's name, but he himself has not appeared jealous for it. Well, saith God, be content, it is all in good time; *judgments are prepared for those scorners*, though they are not yet inflicted; the persons are pitched upon, and shall now be nominated, for they are now in being, who shall do the business. 1. When Hazael comes to be king of Syria, he shall make bloody work among the people, *2 Kings viii. 12.* and so correct them for their idolatry. 2. When Jehu comes to be king of Israel he shall make bloody work with the royal family, and shall utterly destroy the house of Ahab, that sat up and maintained idolatry. Elisha, while thou art on earth, shall strengthen thy hands; and when thou art gone, shall carry on thy work, and be a remaining witness against the apostasy of Israel, and even he shall slay the children of Bethel, the idolatrous city. Note, The wicked are reserved to judgment. *Evil pursues sinners*, and there is no escaping it; to attempt an escape is but to run from one sword's point upon another. See *Jer. xlviii. 41.* *He that flees from the fear, shall fall into the pit; and he that gets up out of the pit, shall be taken in the snare.* Elisha, with the sword of the spirit, shall terrify and wound the consciences of those who escape Hazael's sword of war and Jehu's sword of justice; *With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked*, *Ila. xi. 4.* *2 Thess. vi. 5.* *Hos. ii. 8.* It is a great comfort to good men, and good ministers, to think that God will never want instruments to do his work, in his time, but when they are gone, others shall be raised up to carry it on.

6. The comfortable information God gives him of the number of Israelites who retained their integrity, though he thought he was left alone, *ver. 18.* *I have left me seven thousand in Israel*, (besides Judah) *which have not bowed the knee to Baal.* Note, 1. In times of the greatest degeneracy and apostasy, God has always had, and will have a remnant faithful to him; some that keep their integrity, and do not go down the stream. The apostle mentions this answer of God to Elijah, *Rom. xi. 4.* and applies it to his own day, when the Jews generally rejected the Gospel, yet, saith he, *at this time also there is a remnant*, *ver. 5.* 2. It is God's work to preserve that remnant, and distinguish them from the rest, for without his grace they could not have distinguished themselves. *I have left me*; it is therefore said to be a remnant, according to the election of grace. 3. It is but a little remnant, in comparison with the degenerate race; what is seven thousand to the thousands of Israel? Yet when those of every age come together, they will be found many more, *twelve thousand sealed out of each tribe*, *Rev. vii. 4.* 4. God's faithful ones are often his hidden ones, *Psal. lxxxiii. 3.* and the visible church scarce visible; the wheat lost in the chaff, and the gold in the dross, till the sifting, refining, separating day comes. 5. The Lord knows them that are his, though we do not; he sees in secret. 6. There are more good people in the world, than some wise and holy men think there are. Their jealousy of themselves, and for God, makes them think the corruption is universal; but God sees not as they do. When we come to heaven, as we shall miss a great many thence, whom we thought to have met there; so we shall meet a great many there, whom we little thought to have met there. God's love often proves larger than man's charity, and more extensive.

19. ¶ So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. 20. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me I pray thee, kiss my father, and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again; for what have I to do with thee? 21. And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled the flesh with the instruments of the oxen: and gave unto the people, and they did eat: then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

Elisha was named last in the orders God gave to Elijah, but is first called, for by him the other two were to be called. He must come in Elijah's room; yet Elijah is forward to raise him, and is far from being jealous of his successor; but rejoiceth to think that he shall leave the work of God in such good hands.

Concerning the call of Elisha observe,

1. That it was a preventing surprising call: Elijah found him by divine direction, or perhaps, he was before acquainted with him, and knew where to find him: He found him not in the schools of the prophets, but in the field; not reading, or praying, or sacrificing, but ploughing, *ver. 19.* Though a great man, as appears by his seat, *ver. 21.* master of the ground, and oxen, and servants, yet he did not think it any disparagement to him, to follow his business himself, and not only to inspect his servants, but himself to lay his hand to the plough. Idleness is no man's honour, nor is husbandry any man's disgrace. An honest calling in the world, doth not at all put us out of the way of our heavenly calling, no more than it did Elisha, who was taken from following the plough, to feed Israel, and to sow the seed of the word; as the apostle from fishing, to catch men. Elisha enquired not after Elijah, but was prevented with this call. We love God, and choose him, because he chose us, and loved us first.

2. That it was a powerful call. Elijah did but cast his mantle upon him, *ver. 19.* in token of friendship, that he would take him under his care and tuition, as he did under his mantle, and to be one with him in the same cloaths, or in token of his being clothed with the spirit of Elijah; now he put some of his honours upon him, as Moses on Joshua, *Numb. xxvii. 20.* but when Elijah went to heaven, he had the mantle entire, *2 Kings ii. 13.* And immediately he left the oxen to go as they would, and ran after Elijah, and assured him that he would follow him presently, *ver. 20.* An invisible hand touched his heart, and unaccountably inclined him by a secret power, without any external persuasions, to quit his husbandry, and give himself to the ministry. It is in a day of power, that Christ's subjects are made willing, *Psal. cx. 3.* nor would any come to Christ, unless they were thus drawn. Elisha came to a resolution presently, but begged a little time, not to ask leave, but only to take leave of his parents. This was not an excuse for delay, like his, *Luke ix. 61.* that he desired he might bid them farewell that were at home; but only a reservation of the respect and duty he owed to his father and mother. Elijah bids him go back and do that, he would not hinder him; nay, if he would he might go back for good and all, for any thing he had done to him. He will not force him nor take him against his will; let him set down and count the cost, and make it his own act. The efficacy of God's grace, preserves the native liberty of man's will; so that they who are good are good of choice, and not by constraint; not pressed men, but volunteers.

3. That

3. That it was a pleasant and acceptable call to him, which appears by the farewell-feast he made for his family, *ver. 21*. Though he not only quitted all the comforts of his father's house, but exposed himself to the malignity of Jezebel, and her party, it was a discouraging time for prophets to set out in. A man that had consulted with flesh and blood, would not be fond of Elijah's mantle, nor willing to be in his coat; yet Elisha cheerfully, and with a great deal of satisfaction; leaves all to accompany him. Thus Matthew made a great feast, when he left the receipt of custom to follow Christ.

4. That it was an effectual call. Elijah did not stay for him, lest he should seek to compel him, but left him to his own choice, and he soon arose, went after him, and not only associated with him, but ministered to him as his servant, *poured water on his hands, 2 Kings iii. 11*. It is a great advantage to young ministers, to spend some time under the direction of those that are aged and experienced, whose years teach wisdom; and not to think much, if occasion be, to minister to them. Those that would be fit to teach, must have time to learn: And those that hope hereafter to rule and rule, must be willing at first to stoop and serve.

C H A P. XX.

*This chapter is the history of a war between Ben-hadad king of Syria, and Ahab king of Israel, in which Ahab was once and again victorious; we read nothing of Elijah or Elisha in all this story; it is probable, Jezebel's rage was abated; and the persecution of the prophets began to cool; which gleam of peace Elijah improves, appears not at court; but being told how many thousands of good people there were in Israel, more than he thought of, employs himself, as we may suppose, in founding religious houses, schools, or colleges of prophets in several parts of the country, to be nurseries of religion, that they may help to reform the nation, when the throne and court would not be reformed; whilst they were thus busied, God favoured the nation with the successes we here read of, which were the more remarkable, because obtained against Ben-hadad king of Syria, whose successor Hazael, was ordained to be a scourge to Israel: they must shortly suffer by the Syrians, and yet now triumph over them, that if possible, they might be led to repentance by the goodness of God. Here is (1.) Ben-hadad's descent upon Israel, and his insolent demand, *ver. 1—12*. (2.) The defeat Ahab gave him, encouraged and directed by a prophet, *ver. 13—21*. (3.) The Syrians rallying again, and the second defeat Ahab gave them, *ver. 22—30*. (4.) The covenant of peace Ahab made with Ben-hadad when he had him at his mercy, *ver. 31—34*, for which he is reproved and threatened by a prophet, *ver. 35—43*.*

1. **AND** Ben-hadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together, and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it. 2. And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel unto the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Ben-hadad, 3. Thy silver and thy gold is mine, thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine. 4. And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have. 5. And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Ben-hadad, saying, Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children: 6. Yet I will send my servants unto thee to-morrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put it in their hand, and take it away. 7. Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold, and I denied him not. 8. And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Harken not unto him, nor consent. 9. Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Ben-hadad, Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first, I will do: but this thing I may not do. And the messengers departed, and brought him word again. 10. And Ben-hadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me. 11. And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off.

Here is, 1. The threatening descent which Ben-hadad made upon Ahab's kingdom, and the siege he laid to Samaria, his royal city, *ver. 1*. What the ground of the quarrel was, we are not told, covetousness and ambition was the principle, which would never want some pretence or other; David, in his time, had quite subdued the Syrians; and made them tributaries to Israel, but Israel's apostasy from God makes them formidable again; Ahab had tempted the Syrians to invade Israel once, *chap. xv. 18, 19, 20*, and now they did it of their own accord; it is dangerous bringing in a foreign force into a country, posterity may pay dear for it. Ben-hadad had with him thirty-two kings, who were either tributaries to him, and bound in duty to attend him, or confederates with him, and bound in interest to assist him; how little did the title of king look, when all these poor petty governors pretended to it?

2. The treaty between these two kings; surely Israel's defence was departed from them, or else the Syrians could not have marched so readily, and with so little opposition to Samaria, the head and heart of the country, a city lately built, and therefore we may suppose, not well fortified, but

likely to fall quickly into the hands of the invaders; both sides are aware of this, and therefore,

(1.) Ben-hadad's proud spirit sends Ahab a very insolent demand, *ver. 2*. 3. A parley is founded, and a trumpeter (we may suppose) is sent into the city to let Ahab know, that upon these terms he will raise the siege; That Ahab become his vassal, nay his villain, and not only pay him a tribute out of what he has, but make over his title to Ben-hadad, and hold all at his will, even his wives and children, the goodliest of them; the manner of expression is designed to gall them; all shall be mine without exception.

(2.) Ahab's poor spirit sends Ben-hadad a very sneaking submission, it is general indeed, he cannot mention particulars in his surrender, with so much pleasure as Ben-hadad did in his demand, but it is effectual, *I am thine, and all that I have, ver. 4*. See the effect of sin. 1. If he had not by sin provoked God to depart from him, Ben-hadad could not have made such a demand; sin brings men into such straits, by putting them out of divine protection; if God shall not rule us, our enemies shall; a rebel to God, is a slave to all beside. Ahab had prepared his silver and gold for Baal, *1 Kgs. ii. 8*. justly therefore it is taken from him; such an alienation amounts to a forfeiture. 2. If he had not by sin wronged his own conscience, and set that against him, he could not have made such a mean surrender; guilt dispirits men, and makes them cowards; he knew Baal could not help, and had no reason to think that God would, and therefore is content to buy his life upon any terms: skin for skin, and all that is dear to him, he will give for it, he will rather live a beggar, than not die a prince.

3. Ben-hadad's proud spirit rises upon his submission, and becomes yet more insolent and imperious, *ver. 5, 6*. Ahab had laid his all at his feet, at his mercy, expecting that one king would use another generously, that this acknowledgment of Ben-hadad's sovereignty would have contented him, the honour was sufficient for the present, that he might hereafter make use of it if he saw cause, *utis est prostrasse leoni*; but this will not serve. 1. Ben-hadad is as covetous as he is proud, and cannot go away, unless he have the possession; as well as the dominion; he thinks it not enough to call it his, unless he have it in his hands, he will not so much as lend Ahab the use of his own goods above a day longer. 2. He is as spiteful as he is haughty; had he come himself to pick out what he had a mind for, it had been some respect to a crowned head, but he will send his servants to insult the prince and Hector over him, to rifle the palace, and strip it of all its ornaments; nay to give Ahab the more vexation, they shall be ordered not only to take what they please, but if they can but learn which are the persons or things, that Ahab is in a particular manner fond of, to take those, *whichever is pleasant in thine eyes they shall take that away*: We are often crossed in that which we must dote upon, and that proves least safe which is most dear. (3.) He is as unreasonable as he is unjust, and will construe the surrender Ahab made for himself as made for all his subjects too, and will have them all to lie at his mercy; they shall search not only thy house, but *the houses of thy servants too*, and plunder them at discretion; blessed be God for peace and property, and that what we have we can call our own.

4. Ahab's poor spirit begins to rise too much upon his growing insolence, and if it become not bold, yet it becomes desperate, and he will rather hazard his life than give up all thus. (1.) Now he takes advice of his privy council, who encourage him to stand it out. He speaks but poorly, *ver. 7*. appeals to them whether Ben-hadad was not an unreasonable enemy, and did not seek mischief; and what other could he expect from one, that without any provocation given him, had invaded his country, and besieged his capital city: He owns to them how he had truckled to him before, and would have them advise him what he should do in this strait; they spake bravely, *ver. 8*. *Hearken not to him nor consent*; promising no doubt to stand by him in the refusal. (2.) Yet he expresseth himself very modestly in his denial, *ver. 9*. he owns Ben-hadad's dominion over him, *Tell my lord the king I have no design to affront him, nor to recede from the surrender I have already made, what I offered at first I will stand to, but this I may not do*; I must not give what is none of my own. It was a mortification to Ben-hadad, that even such an abject spirit as Ahab's was, dares deny him; yet it should seem by his manner of expressing himself, he durst not have done it if his people had not animated him.

5. Ben-hadad proudly swears the ruin of Samaria, the threatening waves of his wrath sweeten with this cheek, rage and foam and make a noise, he huffs and hectors, and imprecates the impotent revenges of his gods, *if the dust of Samaria serve for handfuls of his army, ver. 10*. so numerous, so resolute an army will he bring into the field against Samaria, and to content is he of their success, it will be done as easily as the taking up a handful of dust; and shall be carried away, even the ground on which the city stands. Thus confident in his pride, thus cruel in his malice; this prepares him to be ruined, though such a prince and such a people are unworthy of the satisfaction of seeing him ruined.

6. Ahab sends him a decent rebuke to his assurance, dares not defy his menaces, only reminds him of the uncertain turns of war, *ver. 11*. Let not him that begins a war, and is girding on his sword, his armour, his harness, boast of victory, or think himself sure of it, *as if he had put it off*, and were come home a conqueror. This was one of the wisest words that ever Ahab spoke, and is a good item or memento to us all: it is folly to boast before of any day, since we know not what it may bring forth, *Prov. xxvii. 1*. but especially to boast of a day of battle, which may prove as much against us, as we promise ourselves it will be for us: It is impolitic to despise an enemy, and to be too sure of victory is the way to be beaten. Apply it to our spiritual conflicts, Peter fell by his confidence; while we are here we are girding on the harness, and therefore must never boast as though we had put it off; *happy is the man that feareth always*, and is never off his watch.

12. And it came to pass, when Ben-hadad heard this message (as he was drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions) that he said unto his servants, Set yourselves in array: And they set themselves in array against the city.

13. ¶ And behold there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day, and thou shalt know that I am the LORD. 14. And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Even by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, Thou, 15. Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two: and after them he numbered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand. 16. And they went out at noon: but Ben-hadad was drinking himself

self drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him. 17. And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Ben-hadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria. 18. And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive. 19. So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out of the city, and the army which followed them. 20. And they slew every one his man: and the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them: and Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse, with the horsemen. 21. And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with great slaughter.

The treaty between the besiegers and the besieged being broken off abruptly, we have here an account of the battle that ensued immediately.

1. The Syrians the besiegers had their direction from a drunken king, who gave orders over his cups, as he was drinking, ver. 12. *drinking himself drunk*, ver. 16. *with the kings in the pavilions*, and this at noon: drunkenness is a sin that armies and their officers have of old been addicted to; say not thou then that their former days were in this respect better than these, though these are bad enough; had he not been very secure he would not have sat to drink; and had he not been intoxicated he would not have been so very secure; security and sensuality went together in the old world and Sodom, *Luke xvii. 26, &c.* Ben-hadad's drunkenness was the forerunner of his fall, as Belshazzar's was, *Dan. v.* How could he prosper that preferred his pleasure before his business, and kept his kings to drink with him, when they should have been at their respective posts to fight for him? In his drink, (1.) He orders the town to be invested, the engines fixed, and every thing got ready for the making of a general attack, ver. 12. but stirs not from his drunken club to see it done; *Wo unto thee, O land, when thy king is such a child.* (2.) When the besiegers made a sally, (and by that time he was far gone) he gave orders to take them alive, ver. 18. not to kill them, which might have been done more easily and safely, but to seize them; which gave them an opportunity of killing the aggressors; so imprudent was he in the orders he gave, as well as unjust, in ordering them to be taken prisoners though they came for peace, and to renew the treaty; thus, as is usual, he drinks and forgets the law, both the policies and the justice of the war.

2. The Israelites the besieged had their directions from an inspired prophet, one of the prophets of the Lord, whom Ahab had hated and persecuted: *And behold a prophet, even one, drew near to the king of Israel*; so it may be read, ver. 13. Behold and wonder, that God should send a prophet with a kind and gracious message to so wicked a prince as Ahab was; but he did it, (2.) For his people Israel's sake, who though wickedly degenerated, were the seed of Abraham his friend, and Jacob his chosen, the children of the covenant, and not yet cast off. (2.) That he might magnify his mercy in doing good to one so evil and unthankful, might either bring him to repentance or leave him the more inexcusable. (3.) That he might mortify the pride of Ben-hadad, and check his insolence: Ahab's idolatry shall be punished hereafter, but Ben-hadad's haughtiness shall be chastised now, for God resists the proud, and is pleased to say, *that he fears the wrath of the enemy*, Deut. xxxii. 26, 27. There was but one prophet perhaps to be had in Samaria, and he drew near with this message, intimating that he had been forced to keep at a distance; Ahab in his prosperity would not have born the sight of him, but now he bids him welcome, when none of the prophets of the groves could give him any assistance; he inquired not for a prophet of the Lord, but God sent one to him unasked, for he waits to be gracious.

Now, (1.) This prophet animates him with an assurance of victory, which was more than all the elders of Israel could give him, ver. 8. though they promised to stand by him. This prophet, who is not named, for he *spoke in God's name*, tells him from God, that this very day the siege should be raised, and the army of the Syrians routed, ver. 13. When the prophet said, *Thus saith the Lord*, we may suppose Ahab began to tremble, expecting a message of wrath, but is revived when it proves a gracious one, it is intimated to him what good use he must make of this blessed turn of affairs, *Thou shalt know that I am Jehovah*, the sovereign Lord of all, God's foretelling a thing so very unlikely, proved that it was his own doing.

(2.) He instructs him what to do for the gaining of this victory. (2.) He must not stay till the enemy attacked him, he must fallily out upon them, and surprise them in their trenches. (2.) The persons employed must be the young men of the princes of the provinces, the pages, the footmen, who were few in number, but two hundred and thirty-two, utterly unacquainted with war, and the unlikelyest men that could be thought of for such a bold attempt; yet these must do it, those weak and foolish things must be instruments of confounding the wise and strong, that while Ben-hadad's boasting is punished, Ahab's may be prevented and precluded, and the excellency of the power might be of God. (3.) Ahab must himself so far testify his confidence in the word of God, as to command in person, though in the eye of reason he exposed himself to the utmost danger by it; but it is fit those who have the benefit of God's promises should venture upon them. Yet, (4.) He is allowed to make use of what other forces he had at hand, to follow the blow when these young men had broke the ice: All he had in Samaria, or within call, were but seven thousand men, ver. 15. it is observable that it is the same number with theirs that had not bowed the knee to Baal, chap. xix. 18. though it is likely not the same men.

3. The issue was accordingly, the proud Syrians were beaten, and the poor despised Israelites were more than conquerors; the young men gave an alarm to the Syrians just at noon, at high dinner-time, supported by what little force they had, ver. 15. Ben-hadad despised them at first, ver. 18. but when they had, with unparalleled bravery and dexterity, *slain every one his man*, and so put the army into disorder, that proud man durst not face them, but mounted immediately, drunk as he was, and made the best of his way, ver. 20. See how God *slips off the spirits of princes*, and makes himself terrible to the kings of the earth. Now where is the silver and gold he demanded of Ahab? Where the handfuls of Samaria's dust? Those that are most secure, are commonly least courageous. Ahab failed not to improve this advantage, but *slew the Syrians with a great slaughter*, ver. 21. Note, God oftentimes makes one wicked man a scourge to another.

22. ¶ And the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go strengthen thyself, and mark and see what thou doest: for at the return of the year the king

of Syria will come up against thee. 23. And the servants of the king of Syria, said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills, therefore they were stronger than we: but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. 24. And do this thing Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their rooms. 25. And number thee an army like the army that thou hast lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot: and we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. And he hearkened unto their voice, and did so. 26. And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Ben-hadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel. 27. And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, and went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them, like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country. 28. ¶ And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys: therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 29. And they pitched one over against the other seven days; and so it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined: and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day. 30. But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and there a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the men that were left: and Ben-hadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber.

We have here an account of another successful campaign which Ahab, by divine aid, made against the Syrians, in which he gave them a greater defeat than in the former: Strange! Ahab idolatrous, and yet victorious; a persecutor, and yet a conqueror. God has wife and holy ends in suffering wicked men to prosper, and in it glorifies his own name.

1. Ahab is admonished by a prophet to prepare for another war, ver. 22. It should seem he was now secure, and looked but a little way before him; those that are careless of their souls, are often as careless of their outward affairs; but the prophet (to whom God made known the following counsels of the Syrians) told him, they would renew their attempt at the return of the year, in hope to retrieve the honour they had lost, and be revenged for the blow they had received. And therefore bid him strengthen himself, put himself into a posture of defence, and be ready to give them a warm reception. God had decreed the end, but Ahab made use the means, else he tempts God; help thyself, strengthen thyself, and God will help and strengthen thee. The enemies of God's Israel are restless in their malice, and though they may take some breathing time for themselves, yet are still *breathing out threatening and slaughter* against the church: It concerns us always to expect assaults from our spiritual enemies and therefore to mark and see what we do.

2. Ben-hadad is advised by those about him concerning the operations of the next campaign.

(1.) They advise him to *change his ground*, ver. 23. They take it for granted it was not Israel, but Israel's gods that beat them, so great a regard was then universally had to invisible powers; but they speak very ignorantly of Jehovah; that he was many, whereas he is one, and his name one; that he was their God only, a local deity, peculiar to that nation, whereas he is the Creator and Ruler of all the world; and that he was a God of the hills only, because David their great prophet had said, *I will lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help*, Psal. xvi. 1. and that his *foundation was in the holy mountain*, Psal. lxxxvii. 1.—lxxxviii. 5. and there was a great talk of his *holy hill*, Psal. xvi. 1.—xxiv. 3. supposing him altogether such an one as their imaginary deities; they fancied he was confined to his hills, and could not or would not come down from them, and therefore an army in the valley would be below his cognizance, and from under his protection; thus vain were the Gentiles in their imaginations concerning God, so wretchedly were their foolish hearts darkened, and *professing themselves to be wise they became fools*. (2.) They advise him to change his officers, ver. 24, 25. not to employ the kings, who were commanders by birth, but captains rather, who were commanders by merit, who were joined to war, would not affect to make a show like the king, but would go through with business; let every man be employed in that which he is brought up to and used to, and preferred to that which he is fit for. Syria it seems was rich and populous, when it could furnish recruits sufficient after to great a defeat, *horse for horse, chariot for chariot*.

3. Both armies take the field; Ben-hadad with his Syrians encamp near Aphek, in the tribe of Ather, a city it is likely in his own possession, one of those which his father had won, ver. 34. and the country about flat and level, and fit for his purpose, ver. 26. Ahab with his forces, posted himself at some distance over against them, ver. 27. but the disproportion of numbers was very remarkable, ver. 27. *the children of Israel*, who were cantoned in the two battalions, looked like *two little flocks of kids*, their numbers small, their equipage mean, and a very sorry figure they made; but the Syrians filled the country with their numbers and with their noise, their chariots and carriages, their bag and baggage.

4. Ahab is encouraged to fight the Syrians, notwithstanding their advantage and confidence. A man of God is sent to him, to tell him, that this numerous army should *all be delivered into his hand*, ver. 28. but not for his sake; be it known to him, he was utterly unworthy for whom God should do this, not because he had praised God, or prayed to him, we do not read that he did either; but because the Syrians had blasphemed God, and had said, *He is the God of the hills and not of the valleys*; therefore God will do it in his own vindication, and to preserve the honour of his own name; if the Syrians had said, Ahab and his people have forsaken their God, and so put themselves out of his protection, and therefore we may venture to attack them, it is likely God would have delivered Israel into their hands; but when they got upon a presumption so very injurious to the divine omnipotence, and the honour of him who is Lord of all hosts, not only in hills and valleys, but in heaven and earth, which they are willingly ignorant of, they shall be undeceived at the expense of that vast army, which is so much their pride and confidence.

5. After the armies had faced one another seven days, (the Syrians, it is likely, boasting, and the Israelites trembling) they engaged, and the Syrians were totally routed, an hundred thousand men slain by the sword of Israel, in the field of battle, *ver. 28.* and twenty-seven thousand men that thought themselves safe under the walls of *Aphek*, a fortified city, (from the walls of which, the shooters might annoy the enemy if they pursued them, *2 Sam. xi. 22.*) found their bane where they hoped for protection, the wall fell upon them, probably overthrown by an earthquake, and the cities of Canaan being walled up to heaven, it reached a great way, and they were all either killed or hurt, or ill frightened. Ben-hadad, who thought his city *Aphek* should have held out against the conquerors, finding it thus unvalled, and the remnant of his forces dispirited and dispersed, he had nothing but feverently to rely upon for safety, and therefore hid himself in a chamber within a chamber, lest the pursuers should seize him. See how the greatest confidence often ends in the greatest cowardice; now is the God of Israel the God of the valleys, or no? He shall know now he is forced into an inner chamber to hide himself, see chap. xxii. 25.

31. ¶ And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life. 32. So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, Is he yet alive? he is my brother. 33. Now the men did diligently observe whether any thing would come from him, and did hastily catch it: and they said, Thy brother Ben-hadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Ben-hadad came forth to him: and he caused him to come up into the chariot. 34. And Ben-hadad said unto him, The cities which my father took from thy father, I will restore, and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away. 35. ¶ And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said unto his neighbour in the word of the LORD, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him. 36. Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him. 37. Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded him. 38. So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face. 39. And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle, and behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver. 40. And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be, thyself hast decided it. 41. And he hastened, and took the ashes away from his face, and the king of Israel discerned him that he was of the prophets. 42. And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand, a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people. 43. And the king of Israel went to his house, heavy and displeased, and came to Samaria,

Here is an account of what followed upon the victory which Israel obtained over the Syrians.

1. Benhadad's tame and mean submission; even in his inner chamber he fears, and would if he could flee further, though none pursues; his servants seeing him and themselves reduced to the last extremity, advised that they surrender at discretion, and make themselves prisoners and petitioners to Ahab for their lives, *ver. 31.* The servants will put their lives in their hands and venture first, and their master shall act according as they speed. Their inducement to take this course, is the great reputation the kings of Israel had for clemency above any of their neighbours; we have heard that they are merciful kings, not oppressive to their subjects that are under their power (as governments then went, that of Israel was one of the most easy and gentle) and therefore not cruel to their enemies, when they lay at their mercy; perhaps they had this notion of the kings of Israel, because they had heard that the God of Israel proclaimed his name *gracious and merciful*, and they concluded their kings would make their God their pattern; it was an honour to the kings of Israel to be thus represented, as indeed every Israelite is dressed as becomes him, when he puts on *bowels of mercies*. They are merciful kings, therefore we may hope to find mercy upon our submission; this encouragement poor sinners have to repent and humble themselves before God: have we not heard that the God of Israel is a merciful God? Have we not found him so? Let us therefore rent our hearts and return to him, *Joel ii. 13.* That is evangelical repentance, which flows from an apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, there is forgiveness with him.

Two things they undertake to represent to Ahab:

(1.) Their master a penitent; for they girded sackcloth on their loins, as mourners, and put ropes on their heads, as condemned criminals going to execution, taking on them to be sorry that they had invaded his country, and disturbed his repose, and to own that they deserved to be hanged for it; here they are ready to do penance for it, and throw themselves at the feet of him whom they had injured, many take on them to repent of their

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wrong-doing, when it doth not succeed, who, if they had prospered in it, would have justified it and gloried in it.

(2.) Their master a beggar for his life: *Thy servant Ben-hadad saith, I pray thee let me live, ver. 32.* Though I live a perpetual exile from my own country, and captive in this, yet upon any terms, let me live. What a great change is here, 1. In his condition, how is he fallen from the height of power and prosperity, to the depths of disgrace and distress, and all the miseries of poverty and slavery; see the uncertainty of human affairs, such turns are they subject to, that the spoke which was uppermost may soon come to be undermost. 2. In his temper; in the beginning of the chapter huffing and boasting, swearing and threatening; and none more high in his demands, but here sneaking and whining, and none more low in his requests; how poorly doth he beg his life at the hand of him whom he had there been trampling upon! The most haughty in prosperity are commonly most abject in adversity, but an evil spirit will be so in both conditions; see how God glorifies himself, when he looks upon proud men and abaseth them, and hides them in the dust together, *Joh xl. 12.*

2. Ahab's foolish acceptance of his submission, and the league he suddenly clapped up with him upon it: he was proud to be thus courted by him whom he had feared, enquires for him with great tenderness, *Is he yet alive? He is my brother*, brother king, though not brother Israelite; and Ahab valued himself more by his royalty, than by his religion, and others accordingly. *Is he thy brother, Ahab?* Did he use thee like a brother, when he sent thee that barbarous message? *ver. 3, 5.* Would he have called thee brother if he had been the conqueror? Would he now have called himself thy servant, if he had not been reduced to the utmost strait? Canst thou suffer thyself to be thus imposed upon by a forced and counterfeit submission? This word brother they catch at, *ver. 33.* and were encouraged by that to go and fetch him to the king, he that calls him brother will let him live; let poor penitents hear God in his word calling them children, *Jer. xxxi. 20.* catch at it, echo to it, and call him father. Ben-hadad, upon his submission, shall not only be coached, he took him up in the chariot, but treated with as an ally, *ver. 34.* he made a covenant with him, not consulting either God's prophets, or the elders of the land, or himself, considering what was fit to be insisted on, but, as if Ben-hadad had been conqueror, he shall make his own terms; he might now have demanded some of Ben-hadad's cities, when all of them lay at the mercy of his victorious army, but is content with the restitution of his own; he might now have demanded the stores and treasures, and magazines of Damascus, to augment the wealth and strength of his own kingdom, but is content with a poor liberty at his own expence to build streets there, a point of honour and no advantage, or no more than what the kings of Syria had had in Samaria, though they never had so much power as he had now to support the demand of it. With this covenant he sent him away, without so much as reproving him for his blasphemous reflections upon the God of Israel, whose honour Ahab had no concern for. Note, There are those on whom success is ill bestowed, they know not how to serve either God or their generation, or even their own true interests with their prosperity; *let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness.*

3. The reproof given to Ahab for his clemency to Ben-hadad, and his covenant with him; it was given him by a prophet in the name of the Lord; the Jews say it was Micaiah, and not unlikely, for Ahab conspires of him, *chap. xxi. 8.* that he used to prophecy evil concerning him: this prophet designed to reprove Ahab by a parable, that he might charge him to condemn himself, as Nathan and the woman of Tekoa did David; to make his parable the more plausible he finds it necessary to put himself into the posture of a wounded soldier.

(1.) With much ado he gets himself wounded, for he would not do it with his own hands; he commanded one of his brother prophets, his neighbour or companion, (for so the word signifies) to smite him, and thus in God's name, *ver. 35.* but finds him not so willing to give the blow as he is to receive it; he refused to smite him, others were forward enough to smite prophets, they need not smite one another; we cannot but think it was from a good principle that he declined it, if it must be done, let another do it, not I, I cannot find it in my heart to strike my friend; good men can much easier receive a wrongful blow than give one, yet because he disobeyed an express command of God, (which was so much the worse if he were himself a prophet) like that other disobedient prophet, *chap. xiii. 24.* he was presently slain by a lion, *ver. 36.* This was intended not only to show in general, how provoking disobedience is, *Col. iii. 6.* but to intimate to Ahab, who no doubt was told the story, that if a good prophet was thus punished for sparing his friend and God's, when God said *smite*, of how much sorer punishment should a wicked king be thought worthy, who spared his enemy and God's, when God said *smite*? *Shall mortal man pretend to be more just than God, more pure or more compassionate than his Maker?* We must be merciful as he is merciful, and not otherwise. The next he met with made no difficulty of smiting him, (*volenti non fit injuria*) and did so that he wounded him, *ver. 37.* he latched blood with the blow, it is likely in his face.

(2.) Wounded as he was, and disguised with ashes that he might not be known to be a prophet, he made his application to the king in a story, whereby he charged himself with such a crime as the king was now guilty of in sparing Ben-hadad, and waits for the king's judgment upon it; the case in short is this, A prisoner taken in the battle was committed to his custody, by a man, (we may suppose one that had authority over him as his superior officer) with this charge, *If he be missing, thy life shall be for his life, ver. 39.* The prisoner has made his escape through his carelessness; Can the chancery in the king's breast relieve him against his captain, who demands his life in lieu of the prisoner's? By no means, saith the king, thou shouldst either not have undertaken the trust, or been more careful and faithful to it, there is no remedy, *curret lex*, thou hast forfeited thy bond, and execution must go out upon it; *thou shalt thy doom be, thyself hast decided it.* Now the prophet has what he would have, puts off his disguise, and is known by Ahab himself to be a prophet, *ver. 41.* and plainly tells him, *Thou art the man: Is it my doom?* No, it is thine, *thyself has decided it*; out of thine own mouth art thou judged, God, thy superior and commander in chief, delivered into thy hands one plainly marked for destruction, both by his own pride, and God's providence, and thou hast not carelessly lost him, but wittingly and willingly dismissed him, and so hast been false to thy trust, and lost the end of thy victory, and therefore expect no other but that *thy life shall go for his life*, which thou hast spared, (and so it did) *chap. xxii. 35.* and thy people for his people, whom likewise thou hast spared, and so they did afterwards, *2 Kings x. 22, 23.* when their other sins brought them low, this came into the account. There is a time, when keeping back the sword from blood, is doing the work of the Lord deceitfully, *Jer. xlviii. 10.* Foolish pity spoils the city.

3. We are told how Ahab took this reproof, he went to his house heavy and displeased, *ver. 43.* not truly penitent, or seeking to undo what he had done amiss, but enraged at the prophet, exasperated against God, as if he had been too severe in the sentence passed upon him, and yet vexed at himself, every way out of humour, notwithstanding his victory; he that by his providence had mortified the pride of one king, by his word cast a damp upon the triumphs of another: *Be wise therefore, O ye kings, and be instructed to serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling, Psal. ii. 10, 11.*

C H A P. XXI.

Ahab is still the unhappy subject of the sacred history; from the great affairs of his camp and kingdom this chapter leads us into his garden, and gives us an account of some ill things, (and ill indeed they proved to him) relating to his domestic affairs.

1. *Ahab is sick for Naboth's vineyard, ver. 1—4. 2. Naboth dies by Jezebel's plot, that the vineyard may escheat to Ahab, ver. 5—14. 3. Ahab goes to take possession, ver. 15, 16. 4. Elijah meets him, and denounceth the judgments of God against him for his injustice, ver. 17—24. 5. Upon his humiliation a reprieve is granted, ver. 25—29.*

1. **A**ND it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house, and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it: or if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. 3. And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. 4. And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased, because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers: and he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

Here is, 1. Ahab's coveting his neighbour's vineyard, which unhappily lay near his palace, and convenient for a kitchen garden; perhaps Naboth had been pleased that he had a vineyard lay so advantageously for a prospect of the royal gardens, or the vending of its products to the royal family, but the situation of it proved fatal to him; if he had had no vineyard, or it had lain obscure in some remote place, he had preserved his life, but many a man's possessions have been his snare, and his neighbourhood to greatness of pernicious consequence. Ahab set his eye and heart on his vineyard, ver. 12. it will be a pretty addition to his domains, a convenient outlet to his palace, and nothing will serve him but a must be his own, he is welcome to the fruits of it, welcome to walk in it; Naboth perhaps would have made him a lease of it for his life to please him, but nothing will please him unless he have an absolute property in it to him and his heirs for ever: he is not such a tyrant as to take it by force, but fairly propoſeth, either to give him the full value of it in money, or a better vineyard in exchange; he had tamely quitted the great advantages God had given him, of enlarging his dominion for the honour of his kingdom by his victory over the Syrians, and now is eager to enlarge his garden, only for the convenience of his house, as if to be penny wife, could atone for being pound foolish. To desire a convenience to his estate was not evil, there would be no buying, if there were no desire of what is bought; the virtuous woman considers a field and buys it; but to desire any thing inordinately, though we would compass it by lawful means, is a fruit of selfishness, as if we must ingross all the conveniences, and none must live, or none live comfortably by us; contrary to the law of contentment, and the letter of the tenth commandment, *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house.*

2. The repulse he met with in this desire; Naboth would by no means part with it, ver. 3. *The Lord forbid it me*, and the Lord did forbid it, else he would not have been so rude and uncivil to his prince, as not to gratify him in so small a matter; Canaan was in a peculiar manner God's land, the Israelites were his tenants, now this was one of the conditions of their leases, that they should not alien, no not to one another, any part of that which fell to their lot, unless in case of extreme necessity, and then but till the year of jubilee, Lev. xxv. 28. Now Naboth foresaw, that if his vineyard were sold to the crown, it would never return to his heirs, no not in the jubilee; he would gladly oblige the king, but he must obey God rather than men, and therefore in this matter desires to be excused; Ahab knew the law, or should have known it, and therefore did ill to ask that which his subject could not grant without sin; some conceive, that he looked upon his earthly inheritance as an earnest of his lot in the heavenly Canaan, and therefore would not part with the former, lest it should amount to a forfeiture of the latter; he seems to have been a conscientious man, who would rather hazard the king's displeasure than offend God; probably was one of the seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal, for which it may be Ahab owed him a grudge.

3. Ahab's great discontent and uneasiness hereupon, he was as before, chap. xx. 43. *heavy and displeased*, ver. 4. grew melancholy upon it, threw himself upon his bed, would not eat, nor admit company to come to him; he could by no means digest the affront, his proud spirit aggravates the indignity Naboth did him in denying him, as a thing not to be suffered; curseth the squeamishness of his conscience, which he pretended to consult the peace of, and secretly meditates revenge; nor could he bear the disappointment, it cut him to the heart to be crossed in his desires, and he was perfectly sick for vexation. Note, 1. Discontent is a sin that is its own punishment, and makes men torment themselves; it makes the spirit sad, the body sick, and all the enjoyments sour, it is the heaviness of the heart, and the rottenness of the bones. 2. It is a sin that is its own parent, it rises not from the condition, but from the mind; as we find Paul content in a prison, so Ahab discontent in a palace: he had all the delights of Canaan, that pleasant land, at command, the wealth of a kingdom, the pleasures of a court, and the honours and powers of a throne: and yet *all this avails him nothing* without Naboth's vineyard; inordinate desires expose men to continual vexations, and they that are disposed to fret, be they never so happy, will always find something or other to fret at.

5. ¶ But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread? 6. And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard. 7. And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give

thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. 8. So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city dwelling with Naboth. 9. And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: 10. And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king: and then carry him out, and stone him that he may die. 11. And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them. 12. They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. 13. And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died. 14. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead. 15. ¶ And it came to pass when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead. 16. And it came to pass when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite to take possession of it.

Nothing but mischief is to be expected when Jezebel enters into the story, that cursed woman, 2 Kings ix. 34.

1. Under pretence of comforting her afflicted husband she feeds his pride and passion, and blows the coals of his corruptions; it became her to take notice of his grief, and to enquire into the cause of it, ver. 5. Those have forgot both the duty and affection of the conjugal relation, that interest not themselves in each others troubles; he tells her what troubled him, ver. 6. yet invidiously conceals Naboth's reason for his refusal, representing it as peevish, when it was conscientious, *I will not give it thee*, whereas he said, *I may not*. What? (saith Jezebel, ver. 7.) *Dost thou govern Israel? Arise and eat bread.* She doth well to persuade him to shake off his melancholy, and not to sink under his burden, to be easy and cheerful; whatever was his grief, grieving would not redress it, but pleasantness would alleviate it; her plea is, *Dost thou not govern Israel?* This is capable of a good sense? Doth it become so great a prince as thou art to cast thyself down for so small a matter? thou shamest thyself, and profanest thy crown; it is below thee to take notice of so inconsiderable a thing. Art thou fit to govern Israel, who hast no better government of thine own passions? Or hast thou so rich a kingdom at command, and canst not thou be without this one vineyard? We should learn to quiet ourselves under our crosses with the thought of the mercies we enjoy, especially our hopes of the kingdom. But she meant it in an ill sense, *Dost thou govern Israel*, and shall any subject thou hast deny thee any thing thou hast a mind to? Art thou a king? It is below thee to buy and pay, much more to beg and pray; use thy prerogative, and take by force what thou canst not compass by fair means; instead of resenting the affront thus, revenge it.—If thou knowest not how to king it thus, let me alone to do it, give me but leave to make use of thy name, and I will soon give thee the vineyard of Naboth, right or wrong it shall be thine own shortly, and cost thee nothing; unhappy princes those are, and hurried apace towards their ruin, who have those about them that stir them up to acts of tyranny, and teach them how to abuse their power.

2. In order to the gratifying of him, she protects and compasseth the death of Naboth; no less than his blood will serve to atone for the affront he had given to Ahab, which she thirsts after the more greedily because of his adherence to the law of the God of Israel; had she aimed only at his land, her false witnesses might have sworn him out of that by a forged deed, she could not have set up so weak a title, but the elders of Jezreel would have adjudged it good; but *the adulterers will hunt for the precious life*, Prov. vi. 26. Revenge is sweet, Naboth must die, and die as a malefactor, to gratify it.

(1.) Never were more wicked orders given by any prince, than these which Jezebel sent to the magistrates of Jezreel, ver. 8, 9, 10. She borrows the privy seal, but the king shall not know what she will do with it; it is probable, this was not the first time he had lent it her, but with it she had signed warrants for the slaying of the prophets; she makes use of the king's name, knowing the thing would please him when it was done, yet fearing he might scruple the manner of doing it; in short she commands them upon their allegiance to put Naboth to death without giving them any reason why or wherefore; had she sent witnesses to inform against him, the judges (who must go *secundum legem & probata*) might have been imposed upon, and their sentence had been rather their unhappiness than their crime; but to oblige them to find the witnesses, sons of Belial, to suborn themselves, and then to give judgment upon testimony which they knew to be false, was such an impudent defiance to every thing that is just and sacred, as we hope cannot be paralleled in any story; she must look upon the elders of Jezreel as men perfectly lost to every thing that is honest and honourable, when she expected these orders should be obeyed; but she will put them in a way how to do it, having as much of the serpent's subtilty as she had of his poison.

1. It must be done under colour of religion.—*Proclaim a fast*, signify to your city that you are apprehensive of some dreadful judgment coming upon you which you must endeavour to avert, not only by prayer, but finding out and by putting away the accursed thing, take on you to be afraid that there is some great offender among you undiscovered, for whose sake God is angry with your city; charge the people, if they know of any such, on that solemn occasion to inform against him, as they tender the welfare of the city, and at last let Naboth be fastened upon as the suspected person, probably, because he doth not join with his neighbours in their worship; That may serve as a pretence to set him on high among the people, to call him to the bar; let proclamation be made, if any one can inform the court against the prisoner, and prove him to be the Achan, they shall be heard; and then let the witnesses appear to give evidence against him. Note, There is no wickedness so vile, so horrid, but religion has sometimes been made a cloak

and cover for it. We must not think at all the worse of fasting and praying for their having been sometimes thus abused, but much the worse of those wicked designs that have at any time been carried on under the umbrage of them.

2. It must be done under colour of justice too, and with the formalities of a legal process. Had the sent to them to hire some of their banditti, some desperate ruffians to assassinate him, to stab him as he went along the streets in the night, it had been bad enough; but to do it by a course of law, to use that power for the murdering of the innocent, which ought to be their protection, was such a violent perverting of justice and judgment as yet we are bid not to marvel at, Eccl. v. 8. The crime they must lay to his charge, was *blaspheming God and the king*; a complicated blasphemy. Sure the could not think to put a blasphemous sense upon the answer he had given to Ahab, as if denying him his vineyard was blaspheming the king; and giving the divine law for the reason, were blaspheming God. No, the pretends not at all any ground for the charge; though there was no colour of truth in it, though witnesses must swear it, and Naboth must not be permitted to speak for himself, or cross-examine the witnesses, but immediately, under pretence of an universal detestation of the crime, they must carry him out and stone him. His blaspheming God would be the forfeiture of his life, but not of his estate, and therefore he is also charged with treason, in blaspheming the king, for which his estate was to be confiscated, that to Ahab might have his vineyard.

(2.) Never were wicked orders more wickedly obeyed, than these were by the magistrates of Jezreel. They do not so much as dispute the command, or make any objection against it, though so palpably unjust; but punctually observed all the particulars of it, either because they feared Jezebel's cruelty, or because they hated Naboth's piety or both; They did as it was written in the letters, ver. 11, 12. neither made any difficulty of it, nor met with any difficulty in it, but cleverly carried on the villany, they stoned Naboth to death, ver. 13. and, as it should seem, his sons with him, or after him: for when God came to make inquisition for blood, we find that article in the account, 2 Kings ix. 26. *I have seen the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons*. Perhaps they were secretly murdered, that they might not claim their father's estate, or complain of the wrong done him. Let us take occasion from this sad story, (1.) To stand amazed at the wickedness of the wicked, and the power of Satan in the children of disobedience. What a holy indignation may we be filled with, to see wickedness in the place of judgment, Eccl. iii. 16. (2.) To lament the hard case of oppressed innocency, and to mingle our tears with the tears of the oppressed that have no comforter, while on the side of the oppressors there is power, Eccl. iv. 1. (3.) To commit the keeping and comforts of our lives to God, for innocency itself will not always be our security. (4.) To rejoice in the belief of a judgment to come, in which such wrong judgments as these will be called over. Now we see that there be just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked, Eccl. viii. 13, but all will be set to rights in the great day.

3. Naboth being taken off, Ahab takes possession of his vineyard. (1.) The elders of Jezreel sent notice to Jezebel very unconcernedly, sent it her as a piece of agreeable news, *Naboth is stoned and is dead*, ver. 14. Here let us observe, that as obsequious as the elders of Jezreel were to Jezebel's orders which she sent from Samaria for the murder of Naboth, so obsequious were the elders of Samaria afterwards to Jehu's orders, which he sent from Jezreel for the murder of Ahab's seventy sons, only that was not done by course of law, 2 Kings x. 6, 7. Those tyrants, that by their wicked orders, debauch the consciences of their inferior magistrates, may perhaps find at last the wheel return upon them; and that those who will not stick to do one cruel thing for them, will be as ready to do another cruel thing against them. (2.) Jezebel, jocund enough that her plot succeeded so well, brings notice to Ahab, that *Naboth is not alive, but dead*, therefore, *Arise, take possession of his vineyard*, ver. 15. He might have taken possession by one of his officers, but to please is he with his accession to his estate, that he will make a journey to Jezreel himself to enter upon it; and it should seem he went in state too, as if he had got some mighty victory, for Jehu remembers long after, that he and Baalshazzar attended him at this time, 2 Kings ix. 25. If Naboth's sons were all put to death, Ahab thought himself entitled to the estate, *ob defectum sanguinis* (as our law expresses it.) If not, yet Naboth dying as a criminal, he claimed it *ob delictum criminis*. Or if neither would make him a good title, the absolute power of Jezebel will give it him, and who dares oppose it? Might often prevails against right, and wonderful is the divine patience that suffers it to do so. God is certainly of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and yet for a time keeps silence when the wicked devours the man that is more righteous than he, Hab. i. 13.

17. ¶ And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18. Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. 19. And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. 20. And Ahab said to Elijah, hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee; because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD. 21. Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up, and left in Israel. 22. And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Abijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin. 23. And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. 24. Him that dieth of Ahab in the city, the dogs shall eat: and him that dieth in the field, shall the fowls of the air eat. 25. ¶ But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. 26. And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out

before the children of Israel. 27. And it came to pass when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his cloaths, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. 28. And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29. Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

In these verses we may observe,

1. The very ill character that is given of Ahab, ver. 25, 26. which comes in here to justify God in the heavy sentence passed upon him, and to shew, that though it was passed upon occasion of his sin, in the matter of Naboth, (which David's sin in the matter of Uriah did too much resemble) yet God would not have punished him so severely, if he had not been guilty of many other sins, especially idolatry; whereas David, except in that one matter, did that which was right. But for Ahab, there was none like him; so ingenious and industrious in sin, and that made a trade of it. He sold himself to work wickedness, i. e. he made himself a perfect slave to his lusts, and was as much at their beck and command, as ever any servant was at his master's. He was wholly given up to sin, and upon condition he might have the pleasures of it, he would take the wages of it, which is death, Rom. vi. 23. Blessed Paul complains that he was *sold under sin*, Rom. vii. 14. as a poor captive against his will; but Ahab was voluntary, he *sold himself to sin*, of choice, and as his own act and deed, he submitted to the dominion of sin. It made him the worse, and his sin no better, nor more excusable, that Jezebel his wife stirred him up to do wickedly, and made him in many respects worse than otherwise he would have been. To what a pitch of impiety did he arrive, who had such tinder of corruption in his heart, and such a temper in his bosom to strike fire into it. In many things he did ill, but he did *worst abominably in following idols*, like the Canaanites; his immoralities were very provoking to God, but his idolatries were especially so. Israel's case was sad, when a prince of such a character as this reigned over them.

2. The message which Elijah was sent with to him, when he went to take possession of Naboth's vineyard, ver. 17, 18. Hitherto God kept silence, did not intercept Jezebel's letters, nor stay the process of the elders of Jezreel; but now Ahab is reproved, and his sin set in order before his eyes. (1.) The person sent is Elijah. A prophet of lower rank was sent with messages of kindness to him, chap. xxi. 13. But the father of the prophets is sent to try him, and condemn him for his murder. (2.) The place is Naboth's vineyard; the time just when he was taking possession of it; then and there must his doom be read him. By taking possession, he avowed all that was done, and made himself guilty, *ex post facto*. There he was taken in the manner, as it were, and therefore the conviction would come upon him with so much the more force. What hast thou to do in this vineyard? What good canst thou expect from it, when it is purchased with blood, Hab. ii. 12. and thou hast caused the owner thereof to lose his life? Job xxxi. 39. Now he was pleading himself with his ill-got wealth, and giving direction for the turning of this vineyard into a flower-garden, his meat in his bowels is turned. *He shall not feel quietness. When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him*, Job xx. 14, 20, 23. Let us see what pass between them.

(1.) Ahab vents his wrath against Elijah, falls into a passion at the sight of him, and instead of humbling himself before the prophet as he ought to have done, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 12. is ready to fly in his face, *Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?* ver. 20. This shews, 1. That he hated him; the last time we found them together, they parted very good friends, chap. xviii. 46. then Ahab had countenanced the reformation, and therefore then all was well between him and the prophet; but now he was relapsed, and worse than ever; his conscience told him he had made God his enemy, and therefore he could not expect Elijah should be his friend. Note, that man's condition is very miserable, that has made the word of God his enemy, and very desperate, that reckons the ministers of that word his enemies, because they tell him the truth, Gal. iv. 17. Ahab having sold himself to sin, was resolved to stand to his bargain, and could not endure him that would have helped him to recover himself. 2. That he feared him. *Hast thou found me?* intimating that he thumped him all he could, and it was a terror to him to see him. The sight of him was like that of the handwriting upon the wall of Belsazzar, it made his countenance change, the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. Never was poor debtor or criminal so confounded at the sight of the officer that came to arrest him. Men may thank themselves, if they make God and his word a terror to them.

(2.) Elijah denounceth God's wrath against Ahab. *I have found thee*, (saith he, ver. 20.) *because thou hast sold thyself to work evil*. Note, Those that give up themselves to sin, will certainly be found out, sooner or later, to their unspeakable horror and amazement. Ahab is now set to the bar, as Naboth was, and trembles more than he did.

1. Elijah finds the indictment against him, and convicts him upon the notorious evidence of the facts, ver. 19. *Hast thou killed and also taken possession?* He is here charged with the murder of Naboth; and it would not serve him to say the law killed him: perverted justice is the highest injustice: Or that if he were unjustly prosecuted, it was not his doing, he knew nothing of it; for it was to please him that it was done, and he shewed himself pleased with it, and to had made himself guilty of all that was done in the unjust prosecution of Naboth. He killed, for he took possession. If he takes the garden, he takes the guilt with it. *Terra transit cum onere*. The land with the incumbrance.

2. He passeth judgment upon him, That his family should be ruined and rooted out, ver. 21. and all his posterity cut off. That his house should be made like the houses of his wicked predecessors, Jeroboam and Baasha, ver. 22. particularly, that they which died in the city should be dog's-meat, and they which died in the field bird's-meat, ver. 24. which had been foretold of Jeroboam's house, chap. xiv. 11. and of Baasha's, chap. xvi. 4. That Jezebel particularly should be devoured by dogs, ver. 23. which was fulfilled, 2 Kings ix. 39. and for Ahab himself that the dogs should lick his blood in the very same place where they licked Naboth's, ver. 19. *Thy blood, even thine*, though it be royal blood, though it swell thy veins with pride, and boil in thy heart with anger, ere long it shall be an entertainment for the dogs; which was fulfilled chap. xxii. 38. This intimates that he should die a violent death, should come to his grave with blood, and that disgrace should attend him, the foresight of which must needs be a mortification to a proud man. Punishments after death are here most insisted on, which though such as light on the body only, perhaps, were designed as figures of the soul's misery after death.

(3.) Ahab's humiliation under the sentence passed upon him, and the favourable message sent him thereupon.

1. Ahab was a piece of a penitent. The message Elijah delivered him in God's name, put him into a fright for the present, so that he *rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth*, ver. 27. He was still a proud hardened sinner, and yet thus reduced. Note, God can make the stoutest heart to tremble, and the proudest to humble itself. His word is quick and powerful, and is, when he pleaseth to make it so, like a *fire and a hammer*, Jer. xxiii. 29. It made Felix tremble. Ahab put on the garb and guise of a penitent, and yet his heart was unhumbled and unchanged. After this, we find the shew and profession of repentance, where yet there wants the truth and substance of it. Ahab's repentance was only what might be seen of men: *Seest thou (saith God to Elijah) how Ahab humbles himself*; it was external only; the garments rent, but not the heart. An hypocrite may go very far in the outward performances of holy duties, and yet come short.

2. He obtained hereby a reprieve, which I may call a piece of a pardon. Though it was but an outside repentance, lamenting the judgment only, and not the sin, though he did not leave his idols, nor restore the vineyard to Naboth's heirs, yet because he did hereby give some glory to God. God took notice of it, and bid Elijah take notice of it; *Seest thou how Ahab humbles himself*, ver. 29. In consideration of this, the threatened ruin of his house, which had not been fixed to any time, should be *adjourned to his son's days*. The sentence should not be revoked, but the execution suspended. Now, 1. This discovers the great goodness of God, and his readiness to shew mercy, which here *rejoiceth against judgment*. Favour is shewed to this wicked man, that God might magnify his goodness, (saith Bishop Sanderson) even to the hazard of other his divine perfections; as if, (saith he) God would be thought unholy, or untrue, or unjust, (though he be neither so nor so) or any thing rather than unmerciful. 2. This teaches us to take notice of that which is good, even in those that are not so good as they should be: Let it be commended as far as it goes. 3. This gives a reason why wicked people sometimes prosper long: God is rewarding their external services, with external mercies. 4. This encourageth all those that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel. If a pretending partial penitent shall go to his house reprieved, doubters, a sincere penitent shall go to his house justified.

C H A P. XXII.

This chapter finishes the history of Ahab's reign. It was promised in the close of the foregoing chapter, that the ruin of his house should not come in his days, but his days were soon at an end. His war with the Syrians at Ramoth-gilead is that which we have an account of in this chapter. 1. His preparations for that war. He consulted, (1.) His privy council, ver. 1—3. (2.) Jehoshaphat ver. 4. (3.) His prophets. 1. His own, who encouraged him to go on in this expedition, ver. 5, 6. Zedekiah particularly, ver. 11, 12. 2. A prophet of the Lord, Micaiah, who was desired to come by Jehoshaphat, ver. 7, 8. sent for, ver. 9, 10, 13, 14. upbraided Ahab with the credulity of the prophets, ver. 15. but foretold his fall in this expedition, ver. 16, 17, 18. and gave him an account how he came to be thus imposed upon by his prophets, ver. 19—23. He is abused by Zedekiah, ver. 21, 25. and imprisoned by Ahab, ver. 26—28. 2. The battle itself: In which, 1. Jehoshaphat is exposed. But, (2.) Ahab is slain, ver. 29—40. In the close of the chapter we have a short account, 1. Of the good reign of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, ver. 41—53. 2. Of the wicked reign of Ahaziah king of Israel, ver. 54—55.

1. **A**ND they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel. 2. And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. 3. (And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?) 4. And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle, to Ramoth-gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses. 5. And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to-day. 6. Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up, for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king. 7. And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him? 8. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man (Micaiah the son of Im-lah) by whom we may enquire of the LORD; but I hate him, for he doth not prophecy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. 9. Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Im-lah. 10. And the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets prophesied before them. 11. And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the LORD, with these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them. 12. And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the king's hand. 13. And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah, spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth:

let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. 14. And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak.

Though Ahab continued under guilt and wrath, and the dominion of the lust to which he had sold himself, yet as a reward for his professions of repentance and humiliation, though the time drew near when he should descend into battle and perish, yet we have him blessed with a three years peace, ver. 1. and an honourable visit made him by Jehoshaphat king of Judah, ver. 2. The Jews have a fabulous conceit, that when Ahab humbled himself for his sin, and lay in sackcloth, he sent for Jehoshaphat to come to him: to chastise him: and that he staid with him for some time, and gave him to many stripes every day. That is a groundless tradition. He came now, it is probable, to consult with him about the affairs of their kingdom. It is strange, so great a man as Jehoshaphat would pay so much respect to a kingdom revolted from the house of David; and that so good a man would shew so much kindness to a king revolted from the worship of God. But though he was a godly man, his temper was too easy, which betrayed him to snares and inconveniences.

The Syrians durst not give Ahab any disturbance. But,

1. Ahab here meditates a war against the Syrians, and advises concerning it with those about him, ver. 3. The king of Syria gave him the provocation; when he lay at his mercy, he promised to restore him his cities, chap. xx. 34. and Ahab foolishly took his word, when he ought not to have dismissed him, till the cities had been put into his possession: But now, he knows by experience, what he ought to have considered, that as the kisses, so the promises of an enemy are deceitful; and there is no confidence to be put in leagues extorted by distress. Ben-hadad is one of those princes, that thinks himself bound by his word no farther and no longer than it is for his interest. Whether any other cities were restored, we do not find, but Ramoth-gilead was not; a considerable city in the tribe of Gad, on the other side Jordan; a Levites city, and one of the cities of refuge. Ahab blames himself, and his people, that they did not bestir themselves to recover it out of the hands of the Syrians and to chastise Ben-hadad's violation of his league; and resolves to let that ungrateful perfidious prince know, that as he had given him peace, he could give him trouble. Ahab has a good cause, yet succeeds not. Equity is not to be judged of by prosperity.

2. He engages Jehoshaphat, and draws him in to join with him in this expedition, for the recovery of Ramoth-gilead, ver. 4. And here, I do not wonder, that Ahab should desire the assistance of so pious and prosperous a neighbour. Even bad men have often coveted the friendship of the good. It is desirable to have an interest in heaven; and to have those with us, that have God with them. But it is strange, Jehoshaphat will go entirely into Ahab's interests, as to say *I am as thou art, and my people as thy people*. I hope not; Jehoshaphat, and his people, are not so wicked and corrupt as Ahab and his people. Too great a complaisance to evil-doers, has brought many good people through unweariness, into a dangerous fellowship with *unfruitful works of darkness*. Jehoshaphat had like to have paid dear for his compliment, when in the battle he was taken for Ahab. Yet some observe, that in joining with Israel against Syria, he atoned for his father's fault, in joining with Syria against Israel, chap. xv. 19, 20.

3. At the special interest and request of Jehoshaphat, he asks counsel of the prophets concerning this expedition. Ahab thought it enough to consult with his flatterers, but Jehoshaphat moves that they should enquire of the word of the Lord, ver. 5. Note, 1. Wherever a good man goes, he desires to take God along with him, and will acknowledge him in all his ways, ask leave of him, and look up to him for success. 2. Wherever a good man goes, he ought to take his religion along with him, and not be ashamed to own it, no not when he is with those who have no kindness for it. Jehoshaphat has not left behind him at Jerusalem his affection and veneration for the word of the Lord, but both avows it, and endeavours to introduce it into Ahab's court. If Ahab drew him into his wars, he will draw Ahab into his devotions.

Ahab's four hundred prophets, the standing regiment he had of them; prophets of the groves they called them, agreed to encourage him in this expedition, and to assure him of success, ver. 7. He put the question to them with a seeming fairness, *Shall I go, or shall I forbear?* But they knew which way his inclination was, and designed nothing else but to humour the two kings. To please Jehoshaphat, they made use of the name Jehovah, he shall deliver it into the hand of the king; they stole the word from the true prophets, Jer. xxiii. 30. and spoke their language. To please Ahab, they bid him *Go up*. They had, indeed, probabilities on their side; Ahab had not long since beaten the Syrians twice: he had now a good cause, and was much strengthened by his alliance with Jehoshaphat; but they pretended to speak by prophecy, not by rational conjecture; by divine, not human foresight: Thou shalt certainly recover Ramoth-gilead. Zedekiah, a leading man among these prophets, in imitation of the true prophets, illustrated his false prophecy with a sign, ver. 11. He made him a pair of iron horns, representing the workings and their honour and power, (both which were signified by horns, exaltation and force) and with these the Syrians must be pushed. All the prophets agreed, as one man, that Ahab should return from this expedition a conqueror, ver. 12. Unity is not always the mark of a true church and true ministry. Here were four hundred men that prophesied with one mind and one mouth, and yet all in an error.

5. Jehoshaphat cannot relish this sort of preaching: it is not like what he was used to; the false prophets cannot so mimic the true, but that he who had spiritual senses exercised, could discern the fallacy, and therefore he enquires for a prophet of the Lord besides, ver. 7. He is too much a courtier to say any thing by way of reflection on the king's chaplains, but he waits to see a prophet of the Lord; intimating that he could not look upon these to be so. They seemed to be somewhat, (whatever they were, it made no matter to him) but however in conference, they added nothing to him, they gave him no satisfaction; (alluding to Gal. ii. 6.) One faithful prophet of the Lord was worth them all.

6. Ahab has another, but one he hates, Micaiah by name, and to please Jehoshaphat he is willing to have him sent for, ver. 8, 9, 10. Ahab owned they might enquire of the Lord by him, that he was a true prophet, and one that knew God's mind. And yet, 1. He hated him, and was not ashamed to own to the king of Judah that he did so, and to give this for his reason, he *doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil*. And whose fault was that? If Ahab had done well, he had heard nothing but well from heaven: if he do ill, he may thank himself for all the uneasiness which the reproofs and threats of God's word give him. Note, Those are wretchedly hardened in sin, and are ripening apace for ruin, who hate God's ministers because they deal plainly with them, and faithfully warn them of their misery and danger by reason of sin, and reckon those their enemies that tell them the truth. 2. He had (as it should seem) imprisoned him; for when he committed him,

him, ver. 26. he bid the officers carry him back, viz. to the place from whence he came. We may suppose, that this was he that reproved him for his clemency to Ben-hadad, chap. xx. 38. and for that was cast into prison, where he had lain these three years. And that was the reason Ahab knew where to find him to readily, ver. 9. But his imprisonment had not excluded him from divine visits, the spirit of prophecy continued with him there, he was bound, but the word of the Lord was not: Nor did it in the least abate his courage, or make him less confident or faithful in delivering his message. Jehoshaphat gave too gentle a reproof to Ahab, for expressing his indignation against a false prophet, *Let not the king say so*, ver. 8. He should have said, Thou art unjust to the prophet, unkind to thyself, and puttest an affront upon his Lord and thine, in saying so. Such sinners as Ahab must be rebuked sharply. However, he too far yielded to the reproof, that, for fear of provoking Jehoshaphat to break off his alliance with him, he orders Micaiah to be sent for with all speed, ver. 9. The two kings sat each in their robes and chairs of state, in the gate of Samaria, ready to receive this poor prophet, and to hear what he has to say; for many will give God's word the hearing, that will not lend it an obedient ear. They were attended with a croud of flattering prophets, that could not think of prophesying any thing but what was very sweet, and very smooth, to two such glorious princes now in confederacy. They that love to be flattered shall not want flatterers.

Lastly, Micaiah is pressed by the officer that fetched him to follow the cry, ver. 13. That officer was unworthy the name of an Israelite, who pretended to prefer him to a prophet; but he thought him altogether such a one as the rest, who studied to please men, and not God. He tells him how unanimous the other prophets were in foretelling the king's good success; how agreeable it was to the king; that it was his interest to say as they said, he might gain not only enlargement, but preferment by it. They that doat upon worldly things themselves, think every body else should do so too, and, true or false, right or wrong, speak and act for their secular interest only. He intimates likewise, that it would be to no purpose to contradict such a numerous and unanimous vote; he would be ridiculed, as affecting a foolish singularity if he should. But Micaiah knows better things, protests it, and backs his protestation with an oath, that he will deliver his message from God with all faithfulness, whether it be pleasing or displeasing to his prince, ver. 14. *What the Lord saith to me, that will I speak*, without addition, diminution, or alteration. Bravely resolved! and as became one who had his eye to a greater King than either of these, arrayed with brighter robes, and sitting on a higher throne.

15. ¶ So he came to the king: and the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king. 16. And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee, that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the LORD? 17. And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master, let them return every man to his house in peace. 18. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophecy no good concerning me, but evil? 19. And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand, and on his left. 20. And the LORD said, who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. 21. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. 22. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth and do so. 23. Now therefore behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee. 24. But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee? 25. And Micaiah said, Behold thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself. 26. And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah and carry him back unto Annon the governor of the city, and unto Joash the king's son: 27. And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, and with water of affliction; until I come in peace. 28. And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Harken, O people, every one of you.

Here Micaiah doth well, but, as is common, suffers ill for so doing.

(1.) We are here told how faithfully he delivered his message; as one that was more solicitous to please God, than to humour either the great or the many. Three ways he delivers the message, and all displeasing to Ahab.

1. He speaks as the rest of the prophets did, but ironically, *Go, and prosper*, ver. 15. Ahab put the same question to him that he had put to his own prophets, *Shall we go, or shall we forbear?* Seeming desirous to know God's mind, when, like Baalam, he was strongly bent to do his own; which Micaiah plainly took notice of, when he bid him go, but with such an air of pronunciation, as plainly shewed he spake it by way of derision: *q. d.* I know you are determined to go, and I hear your own prophets are unanimous in assuring you of success; go then, and take what follows. They say, *The Lord shall deliver into the hand of the king*; but I do not tell thee that *thus saith the Lord*: no, he saith otherwise. Note, Those de-

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serve to be bantered that love to be flattered; and it is just with God to give up those to their own counsels that give up themselves to their own lusts, *Ecc. vi. 9.* In answer to this, Ahab adjures him to tell him the truth, and not to jest with him, ver. 16. as if he sincerely desired to know both what God would have him do, and what he would do with him; yet intending to represent the prophet as a perverse ill-humoured man, that would not tell him the truth till he was thus put to his oath, or adjured to do it.

2. Being thus pressed, he plainly foretold, that the king would be cut off in this expedition, and his army scattered, ver. 17. He saw them in a vision, or dream, dispersed upon the mountains, as sheep that have no one to guide them: *smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered*; *Zech. xiii. 7.* This intimates, (1.) That Israel should be deprived of their king, who was their shepherd; God took notice of it, *these have no master.* (2.) That they would be obliged to retire, *re infecta.* He doth not foresee any great slaughter in the army, but that they should make a dishonourable retreat; *let them return every man to his house in peace*; put into disorder indeed for the present, but no great losers by the death of their king: He shall fall in war, but they shall go home in peace. Thus Micaiah in his prophecy testified what he had seen and heard, let them take it how they pleased, while the others prophesied purely out of their own hearts, see *Jer. xxiii. 28.* The prophet that has a dream, let him tell that, and to quote his authority; *and he that has my word, let him speak my word faithfully*, and not his own; for *what is the chaff to the wheat?* Now Ahab finds himself aggrieved, turns to Jehoshaphat, and appeals to him, whether Micaiah had not manifestly a spite to him, ver. 18. They that bear malice to others, are generally willing to believe that they bear malice to them, though they have no cause for it, and therefore to put the worst constructions upon all they say. What evil did Micaiah prophesy to Ahab, in telling him if he proceeded in this expedition it would be fatal to him, while he might choose whether he would proceed in it or no? The greatest kindness we can do to one that is going in a dangerous way, is to tell him of his danger.

3. He gave the king an account whence it was that all his prophets encouraged him to proceed, that God permitted Satan, by them, to deceive him into his ruin, and he by vision knew of it; it was represented to him, and he represented it to Ahab, that the God of heaven had determined he should fall at Ramoth-gilead, ver. 19, 20. that the favour he had wickedly shewed to Ben-hadad might be punished by him and his Syrians, and that he being in some doubt whether he should go to Ramoth-gilead or no, and resolving to be advised by his prophets, they should persuade him to it and prevail, ver. 21, 22. and hence it was that they encouraged him with so much assurance; ver. 23. it was a lie from the father of lies, but by the divine permission. This matter is here represented after the manner of men; we are not to imagine, that God is ever put upon new counsels, or is ever at a loss for means whereby to effect his purposes, nor that he needs to consult with angels, or any creature about the methods he should take, nor that he is the author of sin, or the cause of any man's either telling or believing a lie; but besides what was intended by this, with reference to Ahab himself, it is to teach us, 1. That God is a great king above all kings, and has a throne above all the thrones of earthly princes; you have your thrones, (saith Micaiah to these two kings) and you think you may do what you will, and we must all say as you would have us, *I saw the Lord sitting upon his throne*, and every man's judgment proceeding from him, and therefore I must say as he saith; he is not a man as you are. 2. That he is continually attended and served by an innumerable company of angels, those heavenly hosts, who stand by him, ready to go where he sends them, and to do what he bids them, messengers of mercy on his right hand, of wrath on his left hand, so some. 3. That he not only takes cognizance of, but presides in all the affairs of this lower world, that over-rules them according to the counsel of his own will; the rise and fall of princes, the issues of war, and all the great affairs of state, which are the subject of the consultations of wise and great men, are no more above God's direction, than the meanest concerns of the poorest cottages are below his notice. 4. God has many ways of bringing about his own counsels, particularly concerning the fall of sinners when they are ripe for ruin, he can do it either on this manner or on that manner. 5. That there are malicious and lying spirits, which go about continually seeking to devour, and in order to that seeking to deceive, and especially to put lies into the mouths of prophets, by them to entice many to their destruction. 6. It is not without the divine permission that the devil deceives men, and even thereby God serves his own purpose, *With him is strength, and wisdom, the deceived, and the deceiver are his*, *Joh. xii. 16.* When he pleaseth, for the punishment of those who receive not the truth in the love of it, he not only lets Satan loose to deceive them, *Rev. xx. 7, 8.* but gives men up to strong delusions, to believe him, *2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.* 7. Those are manifestly marked for ruin that are thus given up; God has certainly spoken evil concerning those whom he has given up to be imposed upon by lying prophets; thus Micaiah gave Ahab fair warning, not only of the danger of proceeding in this war, but of the danger of believing those that encouraged him to proceed; thus we are warned to beware of false prophets, and to try the spirits; the lying spirit never deceives so fatally, as in the mouth of prophets.

2. We are here told, how he was abused for delivering his message thus faithfully, thus plainly, in a way so very proper both to convince and to affect.

(1.) Zedekiah, a wicked prophet, impudently insulted him in the face of the court, *smote him on the cheek*, to reproach him, to silence him and stop his mouth, and to express his indignation at him; (thus was our blessed Saviour abused, *Matt. xxvi. 6.* that Judge of Israel, *Mic. v. 1.*) and as if he not only had the Spirit of the Lord, but the monopoly of this Spirit, that he might not go without his leave, he asks, *Which way went the Spirit of the Lord from me to speak to thee?* ver. 24. The false prophets were always the worst enemies the true prophets had, and not only stirred up the government against them, but were themselves abusive to them, as Zedekiah here. To strike within the verge of the court, especially in the king's presence, is looked upon by our law as a high misdemeanor, yet this wicked prophet gives this abuse to a prophet of the Lord, and is not reprimanded, or bound to his good behaviour for it; Ahab was pleased with it, and Jehoshaphat had not courage to appear for the injured prophet, pretending, it was out of his jurisdiction; but Micaiah, though he returns not his blow, (God's prophets are no strikers nor persecutors, dare not avenge themselves, render blow for blow, or be any way accessory to the breach of the peace) yet since he boasted so much of the Spirit, as those commonly do that know least of his operations, he leaves him to be convinced of his error by the event, Thou shalt know when thou *hidest thyself in an inner chamber*, ver. 25. It is likely, Zedekiah went with Ahab to the battle, and took his horns of iron with him, to encourage the soldiers, to see with pleasure the accomplishment of his prophecy, and return in triumph with the king; but the army being routed, he fled among the rest from the sword of the enemy, sheltered himself as Ben-hadad had done, *in a chamber within a chamber*, chap. xx. 38. lest he should perish, as he deserved to do, with those whom he had deluded, as Baalam did, *Numb. xxxi. 8.* and left the blind prophet should

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fall into the ditch, with the blinded prince whom he had misled. Note, Those that will not have their mistakes rectified in time by the word of God, will be undeceived, when it is too late, by the judgments of God.

2. Ahab, that wicked king, committed him to prison, *ver. 27.* not only ordered him to be taken into custody, or recommitting to the jail from whence he came, but to be fed with bread and water, coarse bread and puddle water, till he should return; not doubting but he should return a conqueror, and then he would put him to death for a false prophet, *ver. 27.* Hard usage for one that would have prevented his ruin, but by this it appeared, that God had determined to destroy him, as *2 Chron. xxv. 16.* How confident is Ahab of success! He questions not but to return in peace, forgetting what he himself had minded Ben-hadad of, *Let not him that girdeth on the harness boast; but there was little likelihood of his coming home in peace, when he left one of God's prophets behind him in prison.* Micaiah puts it upon the issue, and calls all the people to be witnesses that he did so, *If thou return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me, ver. 28.* Let me incur the reproach and punishment of a false prophet, if the king come home alive; he ran no hazard by this appeal, for he knew whom he had believed; he that is terrible to the kings of the earth, and treads upon princes as mortar, will rather let thousands of them fall to the ground, than one jot or tittle of his own word; he will not fail to confirm the word of his servants, *Isa. xlv. 26.*

29. ¶ So the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, went up to Ramoth-gilead. 30. And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself and enter into the battle, but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself and went into the battle. 31. But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel. 32. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it is the king of Israel. And they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out. 33. And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. 34. And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host, for I am wounded. 35. And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot. 36. And there went a proclamation throughout the host, about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country. 37. ¶ So the king died, and was brought to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria. 38. And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood, and they washed his armour, according unto the word of the LORD which he spake. 39. Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 40. So Ahab slept with his fathers, and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

The matter in contest between God's prophet and Ahab's prophets is here soon determined, and it is made to appear which was in the right. Here,

1. The two kings march with their forces to Ramoth-gilead, *ver. 29.* That the king of Israel, who hated God's prophet, should so far disbelieve his admonition, as to persist in his resolution notwithstanding, is not strange, but that Jehoshaphat, that pious prince, who had desired to enquire by a prophet of the Lord, as disbelieving and discrediting Ahab's prophets, should yet proceed after so fair a warning, is to be admired; but by the easiness of his temper he was carried away with the delusion (as Barnabas was with the dissimulation, *Gal. ii. 13.*) of his friends; he gave too much heed to Ahab's prophets, because they pretended to speak from God too, and in his country he had never been imposed upon by such cheats: he was ready to give his opinion with the major vote, and to conclude, it was four hundred to one but they should succeed; Micaiah had not forbidden them to go, nay, at the first he said, *Go, and prosper*; if it came to the worst, it was only Ahab's fall that was foretold, and therefore he hoped he might venture.

2. Ahab contrives to secure himself and expose his friend, *ver. 30.* I will disguise myself, and go in the habit of a common soldier, but let Jehoshaphat put on his robes, appear in the dress of a general. He pretended hereby, to do honour to Jehoshaphat, and to compliment him with the sole command of the army in this action, he shall direct and give orders, and Ahab will serve as a soldier under him; but intended, (1.) To make a liar of a good prophet; thus he hoped to elude the danger, and so to defeat the threatening, as if by disguising himself he could escape the divine cognizance, and the judgments that pursued him. (2.) To make a fool of a good king, whom he did not cordially love, because he was one that adhered to God, and so condemned his apostasy; he knew if any perished it must be the shepherd, so Micaiah had foretold; and perhaps he had intimation of the charge the enemy had to fight chiefly against the king of Israel, and therefore basely intended to betray Jehoshaphat to the danger, that he might secure himself; Ahab was marked for ruin, one would not have been in his coat for a great deal, yet he will over-persuade this godly king to muster for him; see what they get that join in affinity with vicious men, whose consciences are debauched, and that are lost to every thing that is honourable; how can it be expected he should be true to his friend that has been false to his God?

3. Jehoshaphat having more piety than policy, put himself into the post of honour, though it was the post of danger, and was thereby brought into peril of his life, but God graciously delivered him; the king of Syria charged his captains to level their force, not against the king of Judah, for with him he had no quarrel, but with the king of Israel only, *ver. 31.* to aim at his person, as if against him he had a particular enmity; now Ahab was justly

repayed by sparing Ben-hadad, who, as the seed of the serpent commonly do, flung the bosom by which he was fostered and saved from perishing; some think he designed only to have him taken prisoner, that he might now give him as honourable a treatment as he had formerly received from him. Whatever was the reason, this charge the officers received, and endeavoured to oblige their prince in this matter, for seeing Jehoshaphat in his royal habit they took him for the king of Israel, and surrounded him. Now, 1. By his danger, God let him know that he was displeased with him, for joining in confederacy with Ahab; he had said in compliment to Ahab, *ver. 4.* I am as thou art, and now he was indeed taken for him; they that associate with evil doers, are in danger of sharing in their plagues. 2. By his deliverance God let him know, that though he was displeased with him, yet he had not deserted him; some of the captains that knew him, perceived their mistake, and so retired from the pursuit of him; but it is said, *2 Chron. xviii. 31.* God moved them, (for he has all hearts in his hand) to depart from him; to him he cried out, not in cowardice, but devotion, and from him his relief came; Ahab was in no care to succour him; God is a friend that will not fail us, when other friends do.

4. Ahab received his mortal wound in the battle, notwithstanding his endeavours to secure himself in the habit of a private centinel; let no man think to hide himself from God's judgment, no, not in masquerade; *Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies*, whatever disguise they are in, *ver. 34.* The Syrian that shot him, little thought of doing such a piece of service to God and his king, for he drew a bow at a venture, not aiming particularly at any man, yet God so directed the arrow, that, (1.) He hit the right person, the man that was marked for destruction, whom, if they had taken alive, as was desired, perhaps Ben-hadad would have spared; those cannot escape with life, whom God hath doomed to death. (2.) He hit him in the right place, between the joints of the harness, the only place about him where the arrow of death could find entrance; no armour is of proof against the darts of divine vengeance; ease the criminal in steel, and it is all one, he that made him, can make his sword to approach to him; that which to us seems altogether casual, is done by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God.

5. The army was dispersed by the enemy, and sent home by the king; either Jehoshaphat or Ahab ordered the retreat of the sheep, when the shepherd was smitten. Every man to his city, for it is to no purpose to attempt any thing more, *ver. 36.* Ahab himself lived long enough to see that part of Micaiah's prophecy accomplished, that all Israel should be scattered upon the mountains of Gilead, *ver. 17.* and perhaps with his dying lips did himself give orders for it; for though he would be carried out of the army to have his wounds dressed, *ver. 34.* yet he would be stayed up in his chariot, to see if his army were victorious; but when he saw the battle increase against them, his spirits sunk and he died, but his death was so lingering, that he had time to feel himself die; and we may well imagine, with what horror he now reflected upon the wickedness he had committed, the warnings he had slighted, Baal's altars, Naboth's vineyard, Micaiah's imprisonment; now he sees himself flattered into his own ruin, and Zedekiah's horns of iron pushing not the Syrians, but himself into destruction; thus is he brought to the king of terrors without hope in death.

6. The royal corpse was brought to Samaria, and buried there, *ver. 37.* and thither was brought the bloody chariot and bloody armour in which he died, *ver. 38.* and one particular circumstance is taken notice of, because there was in it the accomplishment of a prophecy, that when they brought the chariot to the pool of Samaria to be washed, the dogs (and swine, saith the Septuagint) gathered about it, and as usual, licked the blood, or, as some think, the water in which it was washed, with which the blood was mingled; the dogs made no difference between royal blood and other blood: Now Naboth's blood was avenged, *chap. xvi. 19.* and the word of David, as well as Elijah's word, was fulfilled, *Psal. lxxviii. 23.* That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same; the dogs licking the guilty blood, was perhaps designed to represent the terrors that prey upon the guilty soul after death.

Lastly, The story of Ahab is here concluded in the usual form, *ver. 39.* 40. Among his works mention is made of an ivory house which he built, so called, because it was in many places inlaid with ivory; perhaps it was intended to vie with the stately palace of the kings of Judah, which Solomon built.

41. ¶ And Jehoshaphat the son of Aza began to reign over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel. 42. Jehoshaphat was thirty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and five years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. 43. And he walked in all the ways of Aza his father, he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the LORD: nevertheless, the high places were not taken away: for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places. 44. And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel. 45. Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might that he shewed, and how he warred, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 46. And the remnant of the Sodomites which remained in the days of his father Aza, he took out of the land. 47. There was then no king in Edom: a deputy was king. 48. Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold: but they went not; for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber. 49. Then said Ahaziah the son of Ahab unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships: but Jehoshaphat would not. 50. ¶ And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoram his son reigned in his stead. 51. ¶ Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seven-teenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. 52. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 53. For he served Baal, and worshipped him, and provoked

to anger the LORD God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

Here is, 1. A short account of the reign of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, which we shall have a much fuller narrative of in the book of Chronicles, and of the greatness and goodness of that prince, neither of which were lessened or sullied by any thing but his intimacy with the house of Ahab, which, upon several accounts, was a diminution to him; his confederacy with Ahab in war, we have already found dangerous to him, and his confederacy with Ahaziah his son in trade sped no better, he offered to go partner with him in a fleet of merchant ships, that should fetch gold from Ophir, as Solomon's navy did, *ver. 48. see 2 Chron. xx. 35, 36.* but while they were preparing to set sail, they were exceedingly damaged and disabled by a storm, broke in Ezion-geber, which a prophet gave Jehoshaphat to understand was a rebuke to him for his league with wicked Ahaziah, *2 Chron. xx. 57.* and therefore, as we are told here, *ver. 49.* when Ahaziah desired a second time to go partner with him, or, if that could not be obtained, that he might but send his servants with some effects on board Jehoshaphat's ship, he refused; *Jehoshaphat would not,* the rod of God expounded by the word of God, had effectually broke him off from his confederacy with that ungodly unhappy prince; better buy wisdom dear than be without it; but experience is therefore said to be the mistress of fools, because they are fools that will not learn till they are taught by experience, and particularly, till they are taught the danger of associating with wicked people.

Now Jehoshaphat's reign appears here to have been none of the longest, but one of the best. 1. It was *none of the longest*, for he reigned but twenty-five years, *ver. 42.* but then it was in the prime of his time, between thirty-five and sixty, and these twenty-five, added to his father's happy forty-one, give us a grateful idea of the flourishing condition of the kingdom of Judah, and of religion in it, for a great while, even when things were very bad upon all accounts in the kingdom of Israel. If Jehoshaphat reigned not so long as his father, to balance that he had not those blemishes in the latter end of his reign that his father had, *2 Chron. xvi. 9, 10, 12.* and it is better for a man that has been in reputation for wisdom and honour, to die in

the midst of it than to out-live it. (2.) Yet it was one of the best both in respect to piety and prosperity. 1. He did well, he *did that which was right in the eye of the Lord*, *ver. 43.* observed the commands of his God, and trod in the steps of his good father, and persevered therein, he *turned not aside from it*; yet every man's character has some *but* or other, so had his, the *high places were not taken away*, no, not out of Judah and Benjamin, though those tribes lay near Jerusalem, that they might easily bring their offerings and incense to the altar there, and could not pretend, as some other of the tribes, the inconveniency of lying remote: but old corruptions are hardly rooted out, especially when they have formerly had the patronage of those that were good, as the high places had of Samuel, Solomon, and some others. 2. His affairs did well, he prevented the mischiefs which had attended their wars with the kingdom of Israel, establishing a lasting peace, *ver. 44.* which had been a greater blessing if he had contented himself with a peace, and not carried it on to an affinity with Israel; he put a deputy or viceroy in Edom, so that that kingdom was tributary to him, *ver. 47.* and therein the prophecy concerning Esau and Jacob was fulfilled, that *the elder should serve the younger*; and in general mention is made of his might and his wars, *ver. 45.* he pleased God, and God blessed him with strength and success; his death is spoken of, *ver. 50.* to shut up his story, yet in the history of the kings of Israel we find mention of him afterwards, *2 Kings iii. 7.*

2. The beginning of the story of Ahaziah the son of Ahab, *ver. 51—53.* his reign was very short, not two years, some sinners God makes quick work with; it is a very ill character that is here given him, he not only kept up Jeroboam's idolatry, but the worship of Baal likewise; though he had heard of the ruin of Jeroboam's family, and had seen his own father drawn into destruction by the prophets of Baal, who had often been proved false prophets, yet he received no instruction, took no warning, but followed the example of his wicked father, and the counsel of his more wicked mother Jezebel, who was still living. Miserable are the children that not only derive a stock of corruption from their parents, but are thus taught by them to trade with it; and unhappy, most unhappy parents, they that hope to damn their childrens souls.

THE END OF THE FIRST BOOK OF KINGS.

AN E X P O S I T I O N, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, Upon the SECOND BOOK of K I N G S.

This second book of the Kings (which the Septuagint, numbering from Samuel, call the fourth) is a continuation of the former books; and; some think, might better have been made to begin with the fifty-first verse of the foregoing chapter, where the reign of Ahaziah begins. The former book had an illustrious beginning in the glories of the kingdom of Israel, when it was entire; this has a melancholy conclusion, in the desolations of the kingdom of Israel first, and then of Judah, after they had been long broken into two, for a kingdom divided against itself cometh to destruction. But as Elijah's mighty works were very much the glory of the former book, towards the latter end of it; so were Elisha's the glory of this towards the beginning of it—These prophets out-throne their princes; and therefore, as far as they go, the history shall be accounted for in them. Here is, 1. Elijah fetching fire from heaven, and ascending in fire to heaven, *chap. i. and ii.* 2. Elisha working many miracles, both for prince and people, Israelites and foreigners, *chap. iii.—vii.* 3. Hazael and Jehu anointed, the former for the correction of Israel, the latter for the destruction of the house of Ahab, and the worship of Baal, *chap. viii.—x.* 4. The reigns of several of the kings, both of Judah and Israel, *chap. xi.—xvi.* 5. The captivity of the ten tribes, *chap. xviii.* 6. The good and glorious reign of Hezekiah *chap. xix.—xx.* 7. Manasseh's wicked reign, and Josiah's good one, *chap. xx.—xxiii.* 8. The destruction of Jerusalem by the king of Babylon, *chap. xxiv. xxv.* This history, in the several pages of it, confirms that observation of Solomon's. *That righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is the reproach of any people.*

C H A P. I.

We here find Ahaziah, the genuine son and successor of Ahab, on the throne of Israel. His reign continued not two years, he died by a fall in his own house; which, after the mention of the revolt of Moab, *ver. 1.* we have here an account of, (1.) The message, which on that occasion, he sent to the God of Ekron, *ver. 2.* (2.) The message he received from the God of Israel, *ver. 3—8.* (3.) The destruction of the messengers he sent to seize the prophet once and again, *ver. 9—12.* 4. His compassion to, and compliance with the third messenger upon his submission, and the delivery of the message to the king himself, *ver. 13—16.* (5.) The death of Ahaziah, *ver. 17, 18.* In the story we may observe how great the prophet looks, and how little the prince.

1. THEN Moab rebelled against Israel, after the death of Ahab. 2. And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: And he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go enquire of Baal-zebub the God of Ex-

ron, whether I shall recover of this disease. 3. But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, *Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?* 4. Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed. 5. ¶ And when the messengers turned back unto him, he said unto them. Why are ye now turned back? 6. And they said unto him, There came a man up to meet us, and said unto us, Go turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, *Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?* therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. 7. And he said unto them, What manner of man was he which came up to meet you, and told you these words? 8. And

And they answered him, *He was* an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, *It is* Elijah the Tishbite.

We have here, Ahaziah, the wicked king of Israel, under God's rebukes, both by his providence and by his prophet; by his rod and by his word.

1. He is crossed in his affairs. How can those expect, to prosper, that *do evil in the sight of the Lord, and provoke him to anger*? When he rebelled against God and revolted from his allegiance to him, Moab rebelled against Israel, and revolted from the subjection they had long paid to the kings of Israel, *ver. 1.* The Edomites that bordered on Judah, and were tributaries to the kings of Judah, still continued so, as we find in the chapter before, *ver. 47.* till in the wicked reign of Joram they broke their yoke, *chap. viii. 22.* as the Moabites did now. If men brake their covenants with us, and withdraw their duty, we must reflect upon our breach of covenant with God, and the neglect of our duty to him. Sin weakens and impoverisheth us. We shall hear of the Moabites, *chap. iii. 5.*

2. He is seized with sickness in body, not from any inward cause, but by an ill accident; *He fell down through a lattice*, and was ill bruised with the fall; perhaps it threw him into a fever, *ver. 2.* Wherever we go there is but a step between us and death. A man's house is his castle, but not to secure him against the judgments of God. The cracked lattice is as fatal to the son, when God pleaseth to make it so, as the bow drawn at a venture was to the father. Ahaziah would not attempt to reduce the Moabites, lest he should perish in the field of battle; but he is not safe though he tarry at home. Royal palaces do not always yield firm footing. The snare is laid for the sinner in the ground, where he thinks least of it, *Job xviii. 9, 10.* The whole creation, that groans under the burden of man's sin, will at length, sink and break under the weight, like this lattice. He is never safe that has God for his enemy.

3. In his distress he sends messengers to enquire of the god of Ekron, whether he should recover or no, *ver. 2.* And here, (1.) His enquiry was very foolish. *Shall I recover?* Even nature itself would rather have asked, What means may I use that I may recover? But as one solicitous only to know his fortune, not to know his duty, his question is only this, *Shall I recover?* which a little time would give answer to. We should be more thoughtful what will become of us after death, then how, or when, or where we shall die; and more desirous to be told how we may carry ourselves well in our sickness, and get good to our souls by it, than whether we shall recover from it. (2.) His sending to Baal-zebub was very wicked; to make a dead and dumb idol, perhaps newly erected, (for idolaters were fond of new gods) his oracle, was no less a reproach to his reason than to his religion. Baal-zebub signifies the lord of a fly; when of their Baals, that perhaps gave his answers either by the power of the demons, or the craft of the priests, with a humming noise, like that of a great fly; or that had (as they fancied) rid their country of the swarms of flies wherewith it was infested, or of some pestilential disease brought among them by flies. Perhaps this dunghill deity was as famous then, as the oracle of Delphos was long after in Greece. In the New Testament the prince of the devils is called Baal-zebub, *Matth. xii. 24.* for the gods of the Gentiles were devils, and this perhaps grew to be one of the most famous.

4. Elijah, by direction from God, meets the messengers, and turns them back with an answer that shall save them the labour of going to Ekron. Had Ahaziah sent for Elijah, humbled himself, and begged his prayers, he might have had an answer of peace; but if he send to the god of Ekron instead of the God of Israel, that, like Saul's consulting the witch, shall fill the measure of his iniquity, and bring upon him a sentence of death. They that will not enquire of the word of God for their comfort, shall be made to hear it whether they will or no to their amazement.

1. He faithfully reproves his sin, *ver. 3.* *Is it not because there is not (i. e. because you think there is not) a God in Israel, (because there is no God, none in Israel, so it may be read) that ye go to enquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron,* a despicable town of the Philistines, *2ech. ix. 7.* long since vanquished by Israel? Here, 1. The sin was bad enough, giving that honour to the devil which is due to God alone, which was done as much by their enquiries, as by their sacrifices. Note, It is a very wicked thing, upon any occasion or pretence whatsoever, to consult with the devil. This wickedness reigned in the heathen world, *Isa. xlvii. 12, 13.* and remains too much even in the Christian world, and the devil's kingdom is supported by it. 2. The construction which Elijah in God's name puts upon it, makes it much worse: It is because you think not only, that the God of Israel is not able to tell you, but that there is no God at all in Israel; else you would not send so far for a divine answer. Note, A practical and constructive atheism is the cause and malignity of our departures from God. Sure we think there is no God in Israel, when we live at large, make flesh our arm, and seek a portion in the things of this world.

2. He plainly reads his doom; Go, tell him *he shall surely die*, *ver. 4.* Since he is so fond to know his fate, this is it, let him make the best of it. The certain fearful looking for of judgment and indignation which this message must needs cause cannot but cut him to the heart.

3. The message being delivered to him by his servants, he enquires of them by whom it was sent him. And concludes, by their description of him, that it must be Elijah, *ver. 7, 8.* For, (1.) His dress was the same that he had seen him in his father's court. He was clad in a hairy garment, and had a leathern girdle about him, plain and homely in his garb. John Baptist herein resembled him, who was the Elias of the New Testament, for his clothes were made of hair-cloth, and he was girt with a leathern girdle, *Matth. iii. 4.* He that was clothed with the Spirit, despised all rich and gay clothing. (2.) His message was such as he used to deliver to his father, to whom he never prophesied good, but evil. Elijah is one of those witnesses that still torments the inhabitants of the earth, *Rev. xi. 10.* He that was a thorn in Ahab's eyes, will be so in the eyes of his son, while he treads in the steps of his wickedness; and he is ready to cry out, as his father did, *hast thou found me, O mine enemy?* Let sinners consider, that the word which *took hold of their fathers* is still as quick and powerful as ever. See *2ech. i. 6.* *Hab. iv. 12.*

9. Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty, with his fifty: and he went up to him (and behold, he sat on the top of an hill) and he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down. 10. And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. 11. Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty,

with his fifty: and he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly. 12. And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I be a man of God let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty. 13. ¶ And he sent again a captain of the third fifty, with his fifty: and the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and belought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants be precious in thy sight. 14. Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties, with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight. 15. And the angel of the LORD said unto Elijah, Go down with him, be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king. 16. And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron (*is it not because there is no God in Israel to enquire of his word?*) therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shall surely die. 17. ¶ So he died, according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken: and Jehoram reigned in his stead, in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; because he had no son. 18. Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, *are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?*

Here, 1. The king issues out a warrant for the apprehending of Elijah. If the god of Ekron had told him he should die, it is probable he would have taken it quietly, but now, a prophet of the Lord tells him so, reproving him for his sin, and minding him of the God of Israel, he cannot bear it; so far is he from making any good improvement of the warning given him, that he is enraged against the prophet; neither his sickness nor the thoughts of death made any good impressions upon him, nor possessed him with any fear of God; no external alarms will startle and soften secure sinners, but rather exasperate them. Did the king think Elijah a prophet, a true prophet, why then durst he persecute him? Did he think him a common person, what needed such a force to be sent to seize him? Thus a band of men must take our Lord Jesus.

2. The captain that was sent with his fifty soldiers found Elijah on the top of a hill, (some think Carmel) and commanded him in the king's name to surrender himself, *ver. 9.* Elijah was now so far from absconding, as formerly, in the close recesses of a cave, that he makes a bold appearance on the top of a hill; experience of God's protection makes him more bold. The captain calls him a man of God, not that he believed him to be so, or revered him as such a one, but because he was commonly called so; had he really looked upon him as a prophet, he would not have attempted to make him his prisoner, and had he thought him intrusted with the word of God, he would not have pretended to command him with the word of a king.

3. Elijah calls for fire from heaven to consume this haughty daring sinner, not to secure himself; he could have done that some other way; not to revenge himself, for it was not his own cause that he appeared and acted in; but to prove his mission, and to reveal the wrath of God from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. This captain had in scorn called him a man of God, if I be so, saith Elijah, thou shalt pay dear for making a jest of it; he valued himself upon his commission, the king hath said so and so, but Elijah will let him know that the God of Israel is superior to the king of Israel, and has a greater power to enforce his commands. It was not long since Elijah had fetched fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice, 1 Kings xviii. 38. in token of God's acceptance of that sacrifice as an atonement for the sins of the people, but they having slighted that, now the fire falls not on the sacrifice, but on the sinners themselves, *ver. 10.* See here, 1. What an interest the prophets had in heaven, what the spirit of God in them demanded, the power of God effected; Elijah did but speak, and it was done; he that formerly had fetched water from heaven now fetches fire; O the power of prayer! Concerning the work of my hands command ye me, *Isa. xlv. 11.* 2. What an earnest heaven had in the prophets! God was always ready to plead their cause, and avenge the injuries done to them; kings shall still be rebuked for their jakes, and charged to do his prophets no harm; one Elijah is more to God than ten thousand captains and their fifties; doubtless Elijah did this by a divine impulse, and yet our Saviour would not allow the disciples to draw it into a precedent, *Luke ix. 54.* They were now not far from the place where Elias did this act of justice upon provoking Israelites, and would needs in like manner call for fire upon those provoking Samaritans, no, saith Christ, by no means, *you know not what manner of spirit you are of*, i. e. (1.) You do not consider what manner of spirit, as disciples you are called to, and how different from that of the Old Testament dispensation; it was agreeable enough to that dispensation of terror, and of the letter, for Elias to call for fire; but the dispensation of the Spirit and of grace will by no means allow of it. (2.) You are not aware what manner of Spirit you are upon this occasion acted by, and how different from that of Elias; he did it in holy zeal, you in passion; he was concerned for God's glory, you for your own reputation only; God judgeth men's practices by their principles, and his judgment is according to truth.

4. This is repeated a second time; would one think it? (1.) Ahaziah sends a second time to apprehend Elijah, *ver. 11.* as if he were resolved not to be baffled by omnipotence itself? obstinate sinners must be convinced and conquered at last by the fire of hell, for fire from heaven it seems will not do it. (2.) Another captain is ready with his fifty, who in his blind rage against the prophet, and his blind obedience to the king, dares engage in that service which had been fatal to the last undertakers; this is as impudent and imperious as the last, and more in haste, not only *come down quickly*, and do not struggle, but, without taking any notice of what had been done, he bids him *come down quickly*, and not trifle, the king's business requires haste; come down, or I will fetch thee down. (3.) Elijah relents not, but calls for another flash of lightning, which instantly lays this captain

tain and his fifty dead upon the spot; they that will sin like others, must expect to suffer like them; God is inflexibly just.

5. The third captain humbled himself and cast himself upon the mercy of God and Elijah. It doth not appear that Ahaziah ordered him to do so, his stubborn heart is as hard as ever, so regardless is he of the terrors of the Lord, so little affected with the manifestations of his wrath, and withal so prodigal of the lives of his subjects, that he sent a third with the same provoking message to Elijah, but he took warning by the fate of his predecessors, who perhaps lay dead before his eyes; and instead of summoning the prophet down, fell down before him, and begged for his life, and the lives of his soldiers, acknowledging their own ill deserts, and the prophet's power, *ver. 13, 14. Let my life be precious in thy sight.* Note, There is nothing to be got by contending with God: if we would prevail with him, it must be by supplication; if we would not fall before God, we must bow before him; and those are wise for themselves who learn submission from the fatal consequences of others' obstinacy.

6. Elisha doth more than grant the request of this third captain, he *saves his life*; God is not so severe with those that stand it out against him, but he is ready to shew mercy to those that repent and submit to him; never any found it in vain to cast themselves upon the mercy of God; nay, this captain shall have the honour of carrying his point; Elisha being so commanded by the angel, *goes down with him to the king, ver. 15.* Thus he shews, that he before refused to come, not because he feared the king or court, but because he would not be heeded, nor lessen the honour of his master; he *magnifies his office.* He comes boldly to the king, and tells him to his face (took how he will take it) what he had before sent to him, *ver. 16.* that he should shortly die; he mitigates not the sentence, either for fear of the king's displeasure or in pity to his misery; the God of Israel has condemned him, let him send to see whether the god of Ekron can deliver him. So thunderstruck is Ahaziah with this message, when it comes from the prophet's own mouth, that neither he nor any of those about him, dare offer him any violence, nor so much as give him an affront, but out of that den of lions he comes unhurt, like Daniel: Who can harm those whom God will shelter?

Lastly, The prediction is accomplished in a few days; Ahaziah died, *ver. 17.* and dying childless, left his kingdom to his brother Jehoram; his father reigned wickedly twenty-two years; he not two; sometimes the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power; but they, who therefore promise themselves prosperity in impiety, may perhaps find themselves deceived; for (as Bishop Hall observes here) "Some sinners live long to aggravate their judgment, others die soon to hasten it;" but it is certain *evil pursues sinners*, and sooner or later it will overtake them; nor will any thing fill the measure sooner than that complicated iniquity of Ahaziah; honouring the devil's oracles, and hating God's oracles.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The translation of Elijah, that famous glory; in the close of the foregoing chapter, we had a wicked king leaving the world in disgrace, here we find a holy prophet leaving it in honour; the departure of the former was his greatest misery, of the latter his greatest bliss: men are as their end is.—Here is, 1. *Elijah's taking leave of his friends, the sons of the prophets, and especially Elisha, who kept close to him, and walked with him through Jordan, ver. 1—10.* 2. *His rapture into Heaven by the ministry of angels, ver. 11.* and *Elisha's lamentation of the loss this earth had of him, ver. 12.* (2.) *The manifestation of Elisha, as a prophet in his room.* 1. *By the dividing of Jordan, ver. 13, 14.* 2. *By the respect which the sons of the prophets paid him, ver. 15—18.* 3. *By the healing of the unwholesome waters of Jericho, ver. 19—22.* 4. *By the destruction of the children of Bethel that mocked him, ver. 23—25.* This resolution in prophecy makes a greater figure than the resolution of a kingdom.

1. **A**ND it came to pass when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. 2. And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here, I pray thee: for the LORD hath sent me to Beth-el. And Elisha said unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they went down to Beth-el. 3. And the sons of the prophets that were at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he said, Yea, I know it, hold ye your peace. 4. And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here I pray thee: for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. So they came to Jericho. 5. And the sons of the prophets that were at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to day? And he answered, Yea, I know it; hold ye your peace. 6. And Elijah said unto him, Tarry I pray thee, here: for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And they two went on. 7. And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood to view afar off; and they two stood by Jordan. 8. And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

Elijah's time and the events concerning him are as little dated as of any great man in scripture; we are not told of his age; nor in what year of Ahab's reign he first appeared, nor in what year of Joram he disappeared, and therefore cannot conjecture how long he flourished, it is supposed about twenty years in all.

No. LV.*

1. Here we are told,

1. That God had determined to take him into heaven by a whirlwind, *ver. 1.* he would do it, and, it is probable, let him know of his purpose some time before, that he might shortly leave the world, not by death, but be translated body and soul to heaven, as Enoch was, only undergoing such a change as would be necessary to the qualifying him to be an inhabitant in that world of spirits, and such as they will undergo who shall be found alive at Christ's coming; it is not for us to say, why God will put such a peculiar honour upon Elijah above any other of the prophets, he was a man *subject to like passions as we are*, knew sin, and yet never tasted death; wherefore is he thus dignified, thus distinguished, as a man whom the King of kings did delight to honour? We may suppose that herein, 1. God looked back upon his past services, which were eminent and extraordinary, and intended him a recompense for those, and an encouragement to the sons of the prophets to tread in the steps of his zeal and faithfulness, and whatever it cost them to witness against the corruptions of the age they lived in. 2. He looked down upon the present dark and degenerate state of the church, and would thus give a very sensible proof of another life after this, and draw the hearts of the faithful few upwards towards himself, and that other life. 3. He looked forward to the evangelical dispensation, and in the translation of Elijah gave a type and figure of the ascension of Christ, and the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers. Elijah had by faith and prayer conversed much with heaven, and now he is taken thither, to assure us, that if we have our conversation in heaven while we are here on earth, we shall be there shortly, the soul shall, and that is the man, be happy there, there for ever.

2. That Elisha had determined, as long as he continued on earth, to cleave to him, and not to leave him, Elijah seemed desirous to shake him off, would have him stay behind at Gilgal, at Beth-el, at Jericho, *ver. 2—4—6.* Some think out of humility; he knew what glory God had designed him, but would not seem to glory in it, nor desired it should be seen of men; God's favourites covet not to have it proclaimed before them that they are so, as the favourites of earthly princes do; or rather it was to try him, and make his constant adherence to him the more commendable, like Naomi's persuading Ruth to go back; in vain doth Elijah intreat him to tarry here, and tarry there, he resolves to tarry no where behind his master till he goes to heaven, and leaves him behind on this earth, whatever comes of it, *I will not leave thee*; and why so? Not only because he loved him, but, 1. Because he desired to be edified by his holy heavenly converse as long as he staid on earth, which had always been profitable, but we may suppose now more so than ever; we should therefore do all the spiritual good we can one to another, and get all we can one by another while we are together, because we are to be *together but awhile.* 2. Because he desired to be satisfied concerning his departure, and to see him when he was taken up, that his faith might be confirmed, and his acquaintance with the invisible world increased. He had long followed Elijah, and he would not leave him now when he hoped for the parting blessing; let not those that follow Christ come short by despairing at last.

3. That Elijah before his departure visited the schools of the prophets, and took leave of them; it seems, that there were such schools in many of the cities of Israel, probably even in Samaria itself; here we find *sons of the prophets*, and considerable numbers of them even at Beth-el, where one of the calves was set up, and at Jericho, which was lately built in defiance of a divine curse; at Jerusalem, and in the kingdom of Judah, they had priests and Levites, and the temple service, the want of which in the kingdom of Israel God graciously made up by these colleges, where men were trained up and employed in the exercise of religion and devotion, and whither good people resorted to solemnize the appointed feasts with praying and hearing, when they had not conveniences for sacrifice or incense, and thus religion was kept up in a time of general apostasy; much of God was among these prophets, and more were the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife; none of all the high-priests were comparable to those two great men Elijah and Elisha, who, for ought we know, never attended in the temple at Jerusalem. These seminaries of religion and virtue which Elijah; it is probable, had been instrumental to found, he now visits before his departure, to instruct, encourage and bless them. Note, Those that are going to heaven themselves ought to be concerned for those they leave behind them on earth, and to leave with them their experiences, testimonies, counsels and prayers, *2 Pet. i. 15.* When Christ said with triumph, *Now I am no more in the world*, he added with tenderness, *but these are, Father, keep them.*

4. That the sons of the prophets had intelligence, either from Elijah himself, or by the spirit of prophecy in some of their own society, or suspected it by the solemnity of Elijah's farewell, that he was now shortly to be removed, and, 1. They told Elisha of it, both at Beth-el, *ver. 3.* and at Jericho, *ver. 5.* *Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to day?* This they said, not as upbraiding him with his loss, or expecting that when his master was gone, he would be upon a level with them, but to shew how full they were of the thoughts of this matter, and big with the expectation of the event, and to admonish Elisha to prepare for the loss, know we not that our nearest relations, and dearest friends, must shortly be taken from us? *The Lord will take them*, we lose them not till he calls for them, whose they are, and who takes away, and none can hinder him; he takes away superiors from our head, inferiors from our feet, equals out of our arms; let us therefore carefully do the duty of every relation, which we may reflect upon with comfort when it comes to be dissolved. Elisha knew it too well, and sorrow had filled his heart upon this account (as it did the disciples in this case, *John xvi. 6.*) and therefore he did not need to be told it, did not care for hearing of it, and would not be interrupted in his contemplations on this great concern, or in the least diverted from his attendance upon his master, *I know it, hold ye your peace*; he speaks not this peevishly, or in contempt of the sons of the prophets, but as one that was himself and would have them composed and sedate, and with an awful silence expecting the event, *I know it, be silent*, *Zech. ii. 13.* 2. They went themselves to be witnesses of it at a distance, though they might not closely attend, *ver. 7.* *Fifty of them stood to view afar off*, intending to satisfy their own curiosity, but God so ordered it, that they might be eye-witnesses of the honour heaven did that prophet, who was *despised and rejected of men*; God's works are well worthy our notice; when a door is opened in heaven, the call is, *Come up hither, come and see.*

5. That the miraculous dividing of the river Jordan was the preface to Elijah's translation into the heavenly Canaan, as it had been to the entrance of Israel into the earthly Canaan, *ver. 8.* He must go on the other side Jordan to be translated, because it was his native country, and that he might be near the place where Moses died, and that thus honour might be put on that part of the country; which was most despised. He and Elisha might have gone over Jordan by a ferry, as other passengers did, but God would magnify Elijah in his exit, as he did Joshua in his entrance, by the dividing of this river, *Josh. iii. 7.* As Moses with his rod divided the sea, so Elisha with his mantle divided Jordan, both the *insignia* of their office; these waters of old yielded to the ark, now to the prophet's mantle, which, to

those that wanted the ark was an equivalent token of God's presence. When God will take up his faithful ones to heaven, death is the Jordan which immediately before their translation they must pass through, and they find a way through it, a safe and comfortable way; the death of Christ has divided those waters, that the ransomed of the Lord may pass over; *O death, where is thy sting? thy hurt, thy terror!*

9. ¶ And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. 10. And he said, thou hast asked a hard thing: *nevertheless*, if thou see me *when I am* taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so. 11. And it came to pass as they still went on and talked, that behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder, and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. 12. ¶ And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof! And he saw him no more: And he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

Here, 1. Elijah makes his will, and leaves Elisha his heir, now anointing him to be a prophet in his room, more than when he *cast his mantle upon him*, 1 Kings xix. 19.

(1.) Elijah being greatly pleased with the constancy of Elisha's affection and attendance, bid him ask what he should do for him, what blessing he should leave him at parting; he doth not say, (as Bishop Hall well observes) *Ask of me when I am gone*, in heaven I shall be better able to befriend thee, but ask before I go; our friends on earth may be spoken to, and can give us an answer, but we know not that we can have access to any friend in heaven but Christ, and God in him: *Abraham is ignorant of us*, (2.) Elisha, having this fair opportunity to enrich himself with the best riches, prays for a double portion of his spirit; he asks not for wealth or honour, or exemption from trouble, but to be qualified for the service of God and his generation; he asks, 1. For the Spirit, not that the gifts and graces of the Spirit were in Elijah's power to give, therefore he saith not, Give me the Spirit, he knew very well it is God's gift, but *let it be upon me*; intercede with God for me; Christ bid his disciples ask what they would, not one, but all, and promised to send the Spirit with much more authority and assurance than Elijah could. 2. For his spirit; because he was to be a prophet in his room, to carry on his work, to father the sons of the prophets, and face their enemies; because he had the same difficulties to encounter, and the same perverse generation to deal with that he had, so that if he have not his spirit he hath not strength according to the day. 3. For a double portion of his spirit, he doth not mean double to what he had, but double to what the rest of the prophets had, from whom so much would not be expected as from Elisha who had been brought up under Elijah; it is a holy ambition to *correl earnestly the best gifts*, and those which will render us most serviceable to God and our brethren. Note, We all ought, both ministers and people, to set before us the examples of our predecessors, to labour after their spirit, and to be earnest with God for that grace which carried them through their work, and enabled them to finish well. (3.) Elijah promised him that which he asked, but under two provisos, *ver. 10.* 1. Provided he put a value upon it, and esteem it highly, this he teaches him to do by calling it a hard thing, not too hard for God to do, but too great for him to expect; those are the best prepared for spiritual blessings that are most sensible of their worth, and their own unworthiness to receive them. 2. Provided he kept close to his master, even to the last, and was observant of him; *if thou see me when I am taken from thee it shall be so*, otherwise not; a diligent attendance upon his master's instructions, and a careful observance of his example, particularly now in his last scene, was the condition, and would be a proper means of obtaining much of his spirit; taking strict notice of the manner of his ascension would likewise be of great use to him; the comforts of departing saints and their experiences, will mightily help both to gild our comforts and to steel our resolutions; or perhaps this was intended only as a sign, if God favour thee so far as to give thee a sight of me when I ascend, take that for a token that he will do this for thee, and depend upon it; Christ's disciples saw him ascend, and were thereupon assured, that they shall in a little time be filled with his Spirit, *Acts i. 8.* Elisha, we may suppose, hereupon prayed earnestly, *Lord, shew me this token for good.*

2. Elijah is carried up to heaven in a fiery chariot, *ver. 11.* like Enoch he was translated that he should not see death, and was, (as Mr. Cowley expresses it) *the second man that leaped the ditch where all the rest of mankind fell, and went not downward to the sky*; many curious questions might be asked about this matter, which could not be answered; let it suffice that we are here told, (1.) What his Lord when he came found him doing, he was talking with Elisha, instructing, and encouraging him, directing him in his work, and quickening him to it, for the good of those whom he left behind; he was now meditating or praying, as one wholly taking up with the world he was going to, but engaged in edifying discourse, as one concerned about the kingdom of God among men; we mistake if we think our preparation for heaven is carried on only by contemplation and the acts of devotion, usefulness to others will pass as well in our account as any thing; thinking of divine things is good, but talking of them, (if it come from the heart) is better, because for edification, 1 Cor. xiv. 4. Christ ascended as he was a blessing his disciples. (2.) What convoy his Lord sent for him, *a chariot of fire, horses of fire*, which appeared either descending upon them from the clouds, or (as Bishop Patrick thinks) running towards them on the ground; in this form the angels appeared; the souls of all the faithful are carried by an invisible guard of angels into the bosom of Abraham, but Elijah being to carry his body with him, this heavenly guard appeared visibly, not in a human shape, as usual, though so they might have borne him up in their arms, or carried him as on eagles wings, but that had been to carry him like a child, like a lamb, (*Ju. xl. 11—31.*) they appear in the form of a chariot and horses, that he may ride in state, may ride in triumph, like a prince, like a conqueror, *yea more than a conqueror*; the angels are called in scripture Cherubim and Seraphim, and their appearance here, though it may seem below their dignity, answers to both those names; for, 1. Seraphim signifies fiery, and God is said to make them a flame of fire, *Psal. civ. 2.* 2. Cherubim, (as many think) signifies the chariots, and they are called the *chariots of God*, *Psal. lxxviii. 17.* And he is said to *ride upon a cherub*, *Psal. xlii. 10.* to which perhaps there is an allusion in Ezekiel's vision of four living creatures, and wheels, like horses and chariots; in Zechariah's vision they are so represented, *Zech. i. 8. vi. 1.* compare *Rev. vi. 2, &c.* See the readiness of the angels to do the will of God, even in

the meanest service, for the good of them that shall be heirs of salvation; Elijah must remove to the world of angels, and therefore to show how desirous they were of his company, some of them would come to fetch him; the chariot and horses appeared like fire, not for burning but brightness, not to torture and consume him, but to render his ascension conspicuous and illustrious in the eyes of those who stood afar off to view it; Elijah had burned with holy zeal for God and his honour, and now with a heavenly fire, he was refined and translated.

3. How he was separated from Elisha: the chariot parted them both asunder. Note, The dearest friends must part; Elisha had protested he would not leave him, yet now is left behind him.

4. Whither he was carried, he went up by a whirlwind into heaven; the fire tends upward, the whirlwind helped to carry him through the atmosphere, out of the reach of the magnetic virtue of the earth, and then how swiftly he ascended through the pure æther to the world of holy and blessed spirits we cannot perceive.

"But where he stopt will ne'er be known,
"Till phoenix nature, aged grown,
"To a better being shall aspire,
"Mounting herself like him, to eternity in fire."

COWLEY.

Elijah had once in a passion wished he might die, yet God was so gracious to him as not to take him at his word then, but to honour him with this singular privilege that he should never see death; and by this instance and that of Enoch, 1. God shewed how men should have left the world if they had not sinned, not by death, but by a translation. 2. He gave a glimpse of that life and immortality which are brought to light by the gospel, of the glory reserved for the bodies of the saints, and the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers, as then to Elijah; it was also a figure of Christ's ascension.

3. Elisha pathetically laments the loss of that great prophet, but attends him with an encomium, *ver. 12.* (1.) He saw it; thus he received the sign by which he was assured of the grant of his request for a double portion of Elijah's spirit; he looked steadfastly towards heaven, whence he was to expect that gift, as the disciples did, *Acts i. 10.* He saw it awhile but the vision was presently out of his sight, he saw him no more. (2.) He rent his own clothes; in token of the sense he had of his own and the public loss; though Elijah was gone triumphantly to heaven, yet this world could but ill spare him, and therefore his removal ought to be much regretted by the survivors; sure their hearts are hard, whose eyes are dry, when God by taking away faithful useful men, calls for weeping and mourning; though Elijah's departure made way for Elisha's eminency, especially since he was now sure of a double portion of his spirit, yet he lamented the loss of him, for he loved him, and could have served him for ever. (3.) He gave him a very honourable character, as the reason why he thus lamented the loss of him. 1. He himself had lost the guide of his youth; my father, my father, he saw his own condition like that of a fatherless child thrown upon the world, and laments it accordingly. Christ when he left his disciples did not leave them orphans, *John xiv. 15.* but Elijah must. 2. The public had lost the best of its guard, he was the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. He would have brought them to heaven, as in this chariot, if it had not been their own fault; they used not chariots and horses in their wars, but Elijah was to them by his counsels, reproofs and prayers, better than the strongest force of chariot and horse, and kept off the judgments of God; his departure was like the routing of an army, an irreparable loss. Better have lost all our men of war than this man of God.

13. He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan; 14. And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over. 15. And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho, saw him, they said, the spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him: 16. ¶ And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men, let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send. 17. And when they had urged him till he was ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not. 18. And when they came again to him (for he tarried at Jericho) he said unto them, Did not I say unto you, Go not?

We have here an account of what followed immediately after the rapture of Elijah.

1. The tokens of God's presence with Elisha, and the marks of his elevation into Elijah's room, to be, as he had been, a father to the sons of the prophets, and the chariots and horsemen of Israel.

(1.) He was possessed of Elijah's mantle, the badge of his office, which, we may suppose, he put on and wore for his master's sake, *ver. 13.* When Elijah went to heaven, though he did not let fall his body as others do, he let fall his mantle instead of it, for he was unclothed, that he might be clothed upon with immortality; he was going to a world where he needed not the mantle, either to adorn him or shelter him from weather, or to wrap his face in, as 1 Kings xix. 13. He left his mantle as a legacy to Elisha, and though in itself it was of small value, yet as it was a token of the descent of the Spirit upon him, it was more than if he had bequeathed to him thousands of gold and silver. Elisha took it up, not as a sacred relic to be worshipped, but as a significant garment to be worn, and a recompense to him for his own garments which he had rent; he loved his cloke ever since it was first cast over him, 1 Kings xix. 19. He that then so cheerfully obeyed the summons of it, and became Elijah's servant, is now dignified with it, and becomes his successor; there are remains of great and good men, which, like this mantle, ought to be gathered up and preserved by the survivors; their sayings, their writings, their example, that as their works follow them in the reward of them, they may stay behind in the benefit of them.

2. He was possessed of Elijah's power to divide Jordan, *ver. 14.* Having parted with his father he returns to his sons in the schools of the prophets; Jordan

Jordan was between him and them, it had been divided to make way for Elijah to his glory, he will try whether it will divide to make way for him to his business, and by that he will know that God is with him, and that he has the double portion of Elijah's spirit; Elijah's last miracle shall be Elisha's first, thus he begins where he left off, and there is no vacancy. In dividing the waters, (1.) He made use of Elijah's mantle; as Elijah himself had done, *ver. 8.* to signify that he designed no other but to keep his master's method, and would not introduce any thing new, as those affect to do that think themselves wiser than their predecessors. (2.) He applied himself to Elijah's God, *Where is the Lord God of Elijah?* He doth not ask where is Elijah; Either as poring upon the loss of him, as if he could not be easy now he was gone, or as doubting of his happy state, as if, like the sons of the prophets here, he wot not what was become of him, or as curiously enquiring concerning him and the particulars of state he was removed to; no, that is a hidden life, it doth not yet appear what we shall be: nor as expecting help from him; no, Elijah is happy, but is neither omniscient nor omnipotent; but he asks *where is the Lord God of Elijah?* Now Elisha was taken to heaven, God had abundantly proved himself the God of Elijah; if he had not prepared for him that city, and done better for him there than ever he did for him in this world, he would be ashamed to be called his God, *Heb. xi. 16. Matt. xxvii. 31, 32.* Now Elisha was taken to heaven, Elisha enquired, 1. After God; when our creature-comforts are removed, we have a God to go to that lives for ever. 2. After the God of Elijah, the God that Elijah served, and honoured, and pleaded for, and adhered to, when all Israel had deserted him; this honour is done to those who cleave to God in times of general apostasy, that God will be in a peculiar manner their God; the God that owned, and protected, and provided for Elijah, and many ways honoured him, especially now at last? where is he? Lord, am not I promised Elijah's spirit? Make good that promise; the words which next follow in the original *Aph-his*, even he, which we join to the following clause, when he also had smitten the waters; some make an answer to this question, *Where is Elijah's God? Etiam ille adhuc superest*, he is in being still, and nigh at hand; we have lost Elijah but we have not lost Elijah's God, he has not forsaken the earth, it is even he that is still with me. Note, 1. It is the duty and interest of the saints on earth to enquire after God, and apply themselves to him as the Lord God of the saints that are gone before to heaven, the God of our fathers. 2. It is very comfortable to those who enquire after God that they know where to find him, it is even he that is in his holy temple, *Psal. xi. 3, 4.* and nigh to all that call upon him, *Psal. cxlv. 13.* 3. Those that walk in the spirit and steps of their godly faithful predecessors, shall certainly experience the same grace that they experienced, Elijah's God will be Elisha's too, the Lord God of the holy prophets is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever; and what will it avail us to have the mantle of those that are gone, their places, their books, if we have not their spirit, their God?

2. He was possessed of Elijah's interest in the sons of the prophets, *ver. 15.* Some of the fellows of the college at Jericho, who had placed themselves conveniently near Jordan to see what passed, were surprised to see Jordan divided before Elijah on his return, and took that as a convincing evidence that the Spirit of Elijah did rest upon him, and that therefore they ought to pay the same respect and deference to him that they had done to Elijah; accordingly they went to meet him, to congratulate his safe passage through fire and water, and the honour God had put upon him, and they bowed themselves to the ground before him; they were trained up in the schools, Elisha was taken from the plough, yet when they perceive that God is with him, and that this is the man whom he delights to honour, they readily submit to him as their head and father, as the people to Joshua when Moses was dead, *Josh. i. 17.* Those that appear to have God's spirit and presence with them, ought to have our esteem and best affections, notwithstanding the meanness of their extraction and education. Whomsoever God honours, we must. This ready submission of the sons of the prophets, no doubt, was a great encouragement to Elisha, and helped to clear his call.

2. The needless search which the sons of the prophets made for Elijah. (1.) They suggested it possible that he was dropt, either alive or dead, upon some mountain or in some valley; and it would be a satisfaction to them if they sent some lusty men, whom they had at command, in quest of him, *ver. 17.* Some of them perhaps started this as a demurrer to the choice of Elisha: Let them first be sure that Elijah was quite gone. Could they think Elijah thus neglected by heaven, that chosen vessel thus cast away as a vessel in which was no pleasure? (2.) Elisha consented not to their motion, till they overcame him with importunity, *ver. 17.* They urged him till he was ashamed to oppose it any farther, lest he should be thought wanting in his respect to his old master, or loth to resign the mantle again. Wise men may yield to that for quietness and credit sake, which yet their judgment is against, as needless and fruitless. (3.) The issue made them as much ashamed of their proposal, as they by their importunity had made Elisha ashamed of his opposing it. Their messengers, after they had tired themselves with fruitless search, returned with a *non est inventus*, and gave Elisha an opportunity of upbraiding his friends with their folly, *Did I not say unto you, Go not;* *ver. 18.* which would make them the more willing to acquiesce in his judgment another time. Traversing hills and valleys will never bring us to Elijah, but the imitation of his holy faith and zeal will in due time.

19 ¶ And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren, 20. And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. 21. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death, or barren land. 22. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake, 23. ¶ And he went up from thence unto Beth-el: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald-head, go up, thou bald-head. 24. And he turned back and looked on them; and cursed them in the name of the LORD: and there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them. 25. And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.

Elisha had in this respect a double portion of Elijah's spirit, that he wrought more miracles than he did: Some reckon them in number just double. Two are recorded in these verses. A miracle of mercy to Jericho; and a miracle of judgment to Beth-el, *Psal. ci. 1.*

1. Here is a blessing upon the waters of Jericho, which was effectual to heal them. Jericho was built in disobedience to a command, and in defiance to a threatening, and at the expence of the lives of all the builder's children; yet when it was built, it was not ordered to be demolished again, nor were God's prophets or people forbidden to dwell in it, but even within those walls that were built by iniquity, we find a nursery of piety. Fools, they say, build houses for wise men to dwell in: Here the wealth of the sinner provided a habitation for the just. We find Christ at Jericho, *Luke xix. 1.* Hence Elisha came to confirm the souls of the disciples with a more particular account of Elijah's translation than their spies could give them, who saw it at a distance. Here he staid while the fifty men were searching for him. And, 1. The men of Jericho represented to him their grievance, *ver. 19.* God's faithful prophets love to be employed; it is wisdom to make use of them in the little while that their light is with us. They had not applied themselves to Elijah concerning the matter, perhaps because he was not so easy of access as Elisha was; but now we may hope by the influence of the divinity-school in their city, they were reformed. The situation was pleasant, and afforded a good prospect; but they had neither wholesome water to drink, nor fruitful soil to yield them food, and what pleasure could they take then in their prospect? Water is a common mercy, which we should estimate by the greatness of the calamity which the want or unwholeness of it would be. Some think it was not all the ground about Jericho that was barren and had bad water, but some one part only, and that where the sons of the prophets had their lodgings, who are here called the men of the city.

2. He soon redressed their grievance. Prophets should endeavour to make every place they come to some way or other the better for them, endeavouring to sweeten bitter spirits, and to make barren souls fruitful, by the due application of the word of God. Elisha will heal their waters; but, (1.) They must furnish him with salt in a new cruse, *ver. 20.* If salt had been proper to season the water, yet what could so small a quantity do towards it, and what the better for being in a new cruse? But thus they that would be helped must be employed, and their faith and obedience tried. God's works of grace are wrought not by any operation of ours, but in our observance of his institutions. (2.) He cast the salt into the spring of the waters, and so healed the streams, and the ground they watered. Thus the way to reform men's lives, is to renew their hearts; let those be seasoned with the salt of grace, for out of them are the issues of life. Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good. Purify the heart, and that will cleanse the hands. (3.) He did not pretend to do this by his own power, but in God's name. Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters. He is but the instrument, the channel through whom God is pleased to convey this healing virtue. By doing them this kindness with a *thus saith the Lord*, they would be made the more willing hereafter to receive from him a reproof, admonition, or command, with the same preface. If in God's name he can help them, in God's name let him teach and rule them. Thus saith the Lord, out of Elisha's mouth, must ever after be of mighty force with them. (4.) The cure was lasting, and not for the present only. The waters were healed unto this day, *ver. 22.* What God doth, it shall be for ever, *Eccles. iii. 11.* When he by his Spirit heals a soul, there shall be no more death or barrenness, the property is altered; what was useless and offensive, becomes grateful and serviceable.

2. Here is a curse upon the children of Beth-el, which was effectual to destroy them; for it was not a curse causeless. At Beth-el there was another school of prophets, thither Elisha goes next in this his primary visitation, and the scholars there, no doubt, welcomed him with all possible respect: But the townsmen were abusive to him. One of Jeroboam's calves were at Beth-el; this they were proud of, and fond of, and hated them that reproved them. The law did not empower them to suppress this pious academy, but we may suppose it was their usual practice to jeer the prophets as they went along the streets, call them by some nick-name or other, that they might expose them to contempt, prejudice their youth against them, and, if possible, drive them out of their town. Had the abuse done to Elisha been the first of that kind, it is probable it would not have been so severely punished. But mocking the messengers of the Lord, and misusing the prophets, was one of the crying sins of Israel, as we find, *2 Chron. xxxv. 16.* Now here we have,

1. An instance of that sin. The little children of Beth-el, (the boys and girls that were playing in the streets) notice, it is likely, being come to the town of his approach, went out to meet him, not with their hosannas, as they ought to have done, but with their scoffs; they gathered about him, and mocked him, as if he had been a fool, or one fit to make sport with; among other things that they used to jeer the prophets with, they had this particular taunt for him, *Go up, thou bald-head, Go up, thou bald-head.* It is a wicked thing to reproach any for their natural infirmities or deformities; it is adding affliction to the afflicted, and if they are as God made them, the reproach reflects upon him. But this was such a thing as scarce deserved to be called a blemish, and should never have been turned to his reproach, if they had any thing else to twit him with. It was his character, as a prophet, that they designed to abuse. The honour God had crowned him with should have been sufficient to cover his bald head, and protect it from their scoffs. They bid him go up, perhaps reflecting on the assumption of Elijah: Thy master, they say, is gone up, why dost not thou go up after him? Where is the fiery chariot? When shall we be rid of thee too? These children said as they were taught; had learned of their idolatrous parents to call foul names, and give ill language, especially to prophets. These young cocks (as we say) crowed after the old ones. Perhaps their parents did at the same time send them out, and let them on, that, if possible, they might keep the prophet out of their town.

2. A specimen of that ruin which came upon Israel at last for misusing God's prophets, and of which this was intended to give them fair warning. Elisha heard their taunts a good while with patience; but at length the fire of holy zeal for God was kindled in his breast by the continued provocation, and he turned and looked upon them, to try if a grave and severe look would put them out of countenance, and oblige them to retire: to see if he could discern in their faces any marks of ingenuity: But they were not ashamed, neither could they blush; and therefore he cursed them in the name of the Lord, both imprecated and denounced the following judgment, not in personal revenge for the indignity done to himself, but as the mouth of divine justice to punish the honour done to God. His summons was immediately obeyed; two she-bears (bears perhaps robbed of their whelps) came out of an adjacent wood, and presently killed forty-two children, *ver. 24.* Now in this, (1.) The prophet must be justified, for he did it by divine impulse. Had the curse come from any ill principle, God would not have said Amen to it. We may think it had been better to have called for two rods for the correction of these children, than two bears for the destruction of them. But Elisha knew by the Spirit the ill character of these children, what a generation

neration of vipers they were, and what mischievous enemies they would be to God's prophets, if they should live to be men, who began so early to be abusive to them. He intended hereby to punish the parents, and to make them afraid of God's judgments. (2.) God must be glorified, as a righteous God that hates sin, and will reckon for it, even in little children. Let the hideous shrieks and groans of this wicked wretched brood make our flesh tremble for fear of God. Let little children be afraid of speaking naughty words, for God takes notice what they say. Let them not mock at any for their defects in mind or body, but pity them rather; especially let them know, it is at their peril if they jeer God's people or ministers, and scoff at any for well-doing. Let parents that would have comfort in their children train them up well, and do their utmost betimes to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts; for (as Bishop Hall saith) "In vain do we look for good of those children whose education we have neglected; and in vain do we grieve for their miscarriages which our care might have prevented."

Elisha comes to Beth-el, and fears not the revenges of the bereaved parents; God that bid him do what he did, he knew he would bear him out. Thence he goes to mount Carmel, ver. 25. where, it is probable, there was a religious house fit for retirement and contemplation awhile. Thence he returned to Samaria, where, being a public place, this father of the prophets, might be most serviceable. Bishop Hall observes here, "That he can never be a profitable seer, who is either always or never alone."

C H A P. III.

We are now called to attend the public affairs of Israel, in which we shall find Elisha concerned. Here is, 1. The general character of Jehoram king of Israel, ver. 1—3. 2. A year with Moab, in which Jehoram and his allies were engaged, ver. 4—8. 3. The straits which the confederate army was reduced to in their expedition against Moab, and their consulting of Elisha in that distress, with the answer of peace he gave them, ver. 9—19. 4. The glorious issue of this campaign, ver. 20—25. and the barbarous method the king of Moab took to oblige the confederate army to retire, ver. 26, 27. The house of Ahab is doomed to destruction; and though in this chapter we have both its character and its condition better than before, yet the threatened ruin is not far off.

1. **N**OW Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria, the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned twelve years. 2. And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD, but not like his father, and like his mother; for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made. 3. Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom. 4. ¶ And Mesha king of Moab was a sheep-master, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams with the wool. 5. But it came to pass when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

Jehoram the son of Ahab, and brother of Ahaziah, is here upon the throne of Israel; and though he was but a bad man, yet two things are here recorded of him.

1. That he removed his father's idols. He did evil in many things, but not like his father Ahab, or his mother Jezebel, ver. 2. bad he was, but not so bad, so overmuch wicked, as Solomon speaks, *Ecc. vii. 17.* Perhaps Jehoshaphat, though by his alliance with the house of Ahab he made his own family worse, yet he did something towards making Ahab's better. Jehoram saw his father and brother cut off for worshipping Baal, and wisely took warning by God's judgments on them, and put away the image of Baal, resolving to worship the God of Israel only, and consult none but his prophets. So far was well, that it did not prevent the destruction of Ahab's family, nay, that destruction came in his days, and fell immediately upon him, chap. ix. 24. though he was one of the best of the family, for then the measure of its iniquity was full. Jehoram's reformation was next to none: For, 1. He only put away the image of Baal which his father had made, in compliment to Jehoshaphat, who otherwise would not have come into confederacy with him, no more than with his brother, *1 Kings xxii. 48.* But he did not destroy the worship of Baal among the people, for Jehu found it prevalent, chap. x. 19. It was well to reform his family, but it was not enough, he ought to have used his power for the reforming of his kingdom. 3. When he put away the image of Baal, he stuck to the worship of the calves, that politic sin of Jeroboam, ver. 3. He departed not therefrom, because that was the state-engine by which the division between the two tribes was supported. Those do not truly nor acceptably repent, or reform, who only part with the sins that they lose by, but continue their affection to the sins that they get by. 3. He only put away the image of Baal, he did not break it in pieces as he ought to have done. He laid it aside for the present, yet not knowing but he might have occasion for it another time; and Jezebel, for reasons of state, was content to worship her Baal in private.

2. That he did what he could to recover his brother's losses. As he had something more of the religion of an Israelite than his father, so he had something more of the spirit of a king than his brother. Moab rebelled against Israel immediately upon the death of his brother, chap. i. 1. And we do not find that Ahaziah made any attempt to chastise or reduce them; but tamely let go his interest in them, rather than entertain the cares, undergo the fatigues, and run the hazard of a war with them. His folly and pusillanimity herein, and his indifferency to the public good, were the more aggravated, because the tribute which the king of Moab paid, was a very considerable branch of the revenue of the crown of Israel. An hundred thousand lambs, and a hundred thousand weathers, ver. 4. The riches of kings then lay more in cattle than coin, and they thought it not below them to know the state of their flocks and herds themselves, because, as Solomon observes, *the crown doth not endure to every generation*, Prov. xxvii. 23, 24. Taxes were then paid, not so much in money, as in the commodities of the country, which was an ease to the subject, whether it were an advantage to the prince or no. The revolt of Moab was a great loss to Israel, yet Ahaziah sat still in sloth and ease: But an upper-chamber in his house proved as fatal to him as the high places of the field could have been, chap. i. 2. and

the breaking of his lattice, let into his throne a man of more active genius: that will not lose the dominion of Moab, but he will have one path for it.

6. ¶ And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel. 7. And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up; I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses. 8. And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom. 9. So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them. 10. And the king of Israel said, Alas, that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hands of Moab. 11. But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. 12. And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, and the king of Edom went down to him. 13. And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay, for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab. 14. And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee; nor see thee. 15. But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. 16. And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. 17. For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. 18. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand. 19. And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

Jehoram has no sooner got the sceptre into his hand, but he takes the sword into his hand to reduce Moab. Crowns bring such cares and perils to the heads that wear them; no sooner in honour but in war. Now here we have,

1. The concerting of this expedition between Jehoram king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah. Jehoram levied an army, ver. 6. and such an opinion he had of the godly king of Judah, that, (1.) He courted him to be his confederate: *Wilt thou go with me against Moab?* and gained him. Jehoshaphat said, *I will go up, I am as thou art*, ver. 7. Judah and Israel, though unhappily divided from each other, yet can unite against Moab a common enemy. Jehoshaphat upbraids them not with their revolt from the house of David, nor makes it an article of their alliance that they should return to their allegiance, though he had good reason to insist upon it, but treats with Israel as a sister kingdom. Those are no friends to their own peace and strength, who can never find it in their hearts to forgive and forget an old injury, and unite with those that have formerly broke in upon their rights. *Quod initio non valuit, tractu temporis invalefcit.* (2.) He consulted him as his confident, ver. 8. He took advice of Jehoshaphat, who had more wisdom and experience than himself, which way they should make their descent upon the country of Moab; and he advised that they should not march against him the next way over Jordan, but go round through the wilderness of Edom, that they might take the king of Edom (who was tributary to him) and his forces along with them; if two be better than one, much more will not a threefold cord be easily broken. Jehoshaphat had like to have paid dear for joining with Ahab, yet he joins with his son, and this expedition also had like to have been fatal to him. There is nothing got by being yoked with unbelievers.

2. The great straits that the army of the confederates was reduced to in this expedition. Before they saw the face of an enemy, they were all in danger of perishing for want of water, ver. 9. This ought to have been considered before they ventured a march through the wilderness, the same wilderness where their ancestors wanted water, or very near it, *Numb. xxii. 2.* God suffers his people by their own improvidence, to bring themselves into distress, that the wisdom, power, and goodness of his providence may be glorified in their relief. What more cheap and common than water? It is drink to every beast of the field, *Psal. civ. 11.* yet the want of it will soon humble and ruin kings and armies. The king of Israel sadly laments the present distress, and the imminent danger it put them in of falling into the hands of their enemies the Moabites, to whom, when weakened by thirst, they would be an easy prey, ver. 10. It was he that had called these kings together, yet he charges it upon providence, and reflects upon that as unkind, the Lord has called them together. Thus the foolishness of man perverteth his way, and then his heart fretteth against the Lord, *Prov. xix. 3.*

3. Jehoshaphat's good motion to ask counsel of God in this exigence, ver. 11. The place they were now in, could not but mind them of the wonders which their fathers told them of, the waters fetched out of the rock for Israel's seasonable supply. The thought of this, we may suppose encouraged

couraged Jehoshaphat to ask, *Is there not here a prophet of the Lord like unto Moses?* He was the more concerned, because it was by his advice that they fetched this compass through the wilderness, *ver. 8.* It was well that Jehoshaphat enquired of the Lord now, but it had been much better if he had done it sooner, before he engaged in this war, or steered his course; so the distress might have been prevented. Good men are sometimes remiss and forgetful, and neglect their duty, till necessity and affliction drive them to it.

4. Elisha recommended him as a proper person for them to consult with, *ver. 11.* And here we may wonder, 1. That Elisha should follow the camp, especially in such a tedious march as this, as a volunteer, unasked, unobserved, and in no post of honour at all; not in the office of *priest of the war*, Deut. xx. 2. or president of the council of war, but in such obscurity, that none of the kings knew they had such a jewel in the treasures of their camp, nor so good a friend in their retinue. We may suppose it was by special direction from heaven that Elisha attended the war, as *the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.* Thus doth God prevent his people with the blessing of his goodness, and provide his oracle for those that provide them not for themselves. It were often ill with us, if God did not take more care of us, both for soul and body, than we for ourselves. 2. That a servant of the king of Israel knew of his being there, when the king himself did not. Probably it was such a servant as Obadiah was to his father Ahab, one that *fear'd the Lord*: to such a one Elisha made himself known, not to the kings. The account he gives of him is, that it was he that *poured water on the hands of Elijah*, i. e. he was his servant, and, particularly, attended him when he washed his hands. He that will be great, let him learn to minister: He that will rise high, let him begin low.

5. The application which the kings made to Elisha. They went down to him to his quarters, *ver. 12.* Jehoshaphat had such an honour for a prophet, with whom the word of the Lord was, that he would condescend to visit him in his own person, and not send for him up to him. The other two were moved by the straits they were in, to make their court to the prophet. He that humbled himself was thus exalted, and looked great when three kings came to knock at his door, and beg his assistance, see *Rev. iii. 9.*

6. The entertainment which Elisha gave them.

(1.) He was very plain with the wicked king of Israel, *ver. 13.* *What have I to do with thee?* How canst thou expect an answer of peace from me? Go get thee to the prophets of thy father and mother, whom thou hast countenanced and maintained in thy prosperity, and let them help thee now in thy distress. Elisha was not imposed upon, as Jehoshaphat was, by his partial and hypocritical reformation; he knew, that though he had put away the image of Baal, Baal's prophets were still dear to him, and perhaps some of them were now in his camp. Go, faith he, go to them. *Get ye to the gods whom ye have served*, Judg. x. 14. The world and the flesh have ruled you, let them help you; why should God be enquired of by you? *Ezek. xiv. 3.* Elisha tells him to his face, in a holy indignation at his wickedness, that he could scarce find in his heart to look toward him, or to see him, *ver. 14.* Jehoram is to be respected as a prince, but as a wicked man he is a vile person, and is to be contemned, *Psal. xv. 4.* Elisha, as a subject, will honour him, but as a prophet, he will make him to know his iniquity. For them that had such an extraordinary commission, it was fit, though not for a common person, to say to a king, *Thou art wicked*, Job xxxiv. 18. Jehoram has so much grace as to take it patiently; cares not now for hearing of the prophets of Baal, but is a humble suitor to the God of Israel and his prophet, representing the present case as very deplorable, and humbly recommends it to the prophet's compassionate consideration. In effect, he owns himself unworthy, but let not the other kings be ruined for his sake.

(2.) He shewed great respect to the godly king of Judah, *regarded his presence*, and for his sake would enquire of the Lord for them all. It is good being with those who have God's favour, and his prophet's love. Wicked people often fare the better for the friendship and society of those that are godly.

(3.) He composed himself to receive instructions from God: his mind was somewhat ruffled and disturbed at the sight of Jehoram; though he was not got into a sinful heat or passion, nor had spoke unadvisedly, yet his zeal for the present indisposed him for prayer and the operations of the Spirit, which require a mind very calm and sedate: He therefore called for a musician, *ver. 15.* a devout musician, one that used to play upon his harp, and sing psalms to it. To hear God's praises sweetly sung, as David had appointed, would cheer his spirits, and settle his mind, and help to put him into a right frame, both to speak to him, and to hear from him. We find a company of prophets prophesying with a *psalter and a tabret before them*, 1 Sam. x. 5. Those that desire communion with God, must keep their spirits quiet and serene. Elisha being refreshed, and having the tumult of his spirits laid by this divine music, *the hand of the Lord came upon him*, and his visit did him more honour than that of three kings.

(4.) God by him gave them assurance, that the issue of the present distress would be comfortable and glorious.

1. They should speedily be supplied with water, *ver. 16, 17.* To try their faith and obedience, he bids them *make the valley full of ditches* to receive the water. They that expect God's blessings must prepare room for them, *dig the pools for the rain to fill*, as they did in the valley of Baca, and so made even that a well, *Psal. lxxxiv. 6.* To raise their wonder, he tells them they should have water enough, and yet there should be *neither wind nor rain.* Elijah, by prayer, obtained water out of the clouds, but Elisha fetches it no body knows whence. The spring of these waters shall be as secret as the head of the Nile. God is not tied to second causes. Ordinarily, it is by a plentiful rain that God confirms his inheritance, *Psal. lxxviii. 9.* but here it is done without rain, at least without rain in that place. Some of the fountains of the great deep, it is likely, were broken up on this occasion: and, to increase the miracle, *that valley only* (as it should seem) *was filled with water*, and no other place had any share of it.

2. That supply should be an earnest of victory, *ver. 18.* *This is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord; you shall not only be saved from perishing, but shall return in triumph.* As God gives freely to the unworthy, so he gives richly, like himself, more than we are able to ask or think. His grants out-do our requests and expectations. They that sincerely seek for the dew of God's grace, shall have it, and by it be made more than conquerors. It is promised, that they should be masters of the rebels country, and they are permitted to lay it waste and ruin it, *ver. 19.* The law forbade them to fell fruit-trees to be employed in their sieges, *Deut. xx. 19.* but not when it was intended in justice for the starving of a country that had forfeited its fruits, by denying tribute to whom tribute is due.

20. And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat-offering was offered, that behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water. 21. ¶ And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they ga-

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thered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border. 22. And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood: 23. And they said, *This is blood*: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil. 24. And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up, and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went forward smiting the Moabites even in their country. 25. And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it, and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees: only in Kir-haraseth left they the stones thereof: howbeit the slingers went about it, and smote it. 26. ¶ And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not. 27. Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall: and there was great indignation against Israel: And they departed from him, and returned to their own land.

We have here the divine gift of both those things which God had promised by Elisha; water and victory; and the former not only a pledge of the latter, but a means of it. God, that created and commands all the waters both above and beneath the firmament, sent them in abundance of water on a sudden, which did them double service.

1. It relieved their armies, which were ready to perish, *ver. 20.* And, which was very observable, this relief came just at the time of the offering of the morning sacrifice upon the altar at Jerusalem, a certain time, and universally known; that time Elisha chose for his hour of prayer, (it is likely, looking towards the temple, for so they were to do in their prayers, when they were going out to battle, and encamped at a distance, 1 Kings viii. 4.) in token of his communion with the temple-service, and his expectation of speeding in the virtue of the great sacrifice. We now cannot pitch upon any hour more acceptable than another, because our high priest is always appearing for us, to present and plead his sacrifice. That time God chose for the hour of mercy, to put an honour upon the daily sacrifice which had been despised. God answered Daniel's prayer just at the time of the evening sacrifice, Dan. ix. 21. for he will own his own institutions.

2. It deceived their enemies, which were ready to triumph, into their destruction. Notice is brought to the Moabites of the advances of the confederate army; to oppose which the posse is raised, *all that were able to put on armour*, and posted upon the frontiers, where they are ready to give them a warm reception, *ver. 21.* promising themselves, that it would be easy dealing with an army fatigued by so long a march through the wilderness of Edom. But see here,

(1.) How easily they were drawn into their own delusions: observe the steps of their self-deceit. 1. They saw the water in the valley where the army of Israel encamped, and conceived it was blood, *ver. 22.* because they knew it was a dry valley, and (there having been no rain) could not imagine it should be water. The sun shone upon it, and probably, *the sky was red and lowering*, a preface of foul weather that day, Matt. xvi. 3. and so it proved to them. But this making the water look red, their own fancies, which made them willing to believe what made for them, suggested, *This is blood*; God permitting them thus to impose upon themselves. 2. If their camp was thus full of blood, they conclude, certainly the kings have fallen out (as confederates of different interests are apt to do) and they have slain one another, *ver. 23.* for what else should slay them? And, 3. If the armies have slain one another, we have nothing to do but to divide the prey, now therefore *Moab, to the spoil.* These were the gradual suggestions of some elevated fancies among them, that thought themselves wiser and happier in their conjectures than their neighbours; and the rest being desirous it should be so, were forward to believe it was so. *Quod volumus facile credimus.* Thus they that are to be destroyed, are first deceived, *Rev. xx. 8.* and none are so effectually deceived as those that deceive themselves.

(2.) How fatally they thereby run upon their own destruction. They rushed carelessly into the camp of Israel to plunder it, but were undeceived when it was too late. The Israelites, animated by the assurances Elisha had given them of victory, fell upon them with the utmost fury, routed them, and pursued them into their own country, *ver. 24.* which they laid waste, *ver. 25.* destroyed the cities, marred the ground, stopped up the wells, felled the timber, and left only the royal city standing; the walls of which they made great breaches in with their battering engines. This they got by rebelling against Israel. Who ever harden'd his heart against God and prospered?

In the close of the chapter we are told, what the king of Moab did when he found himself reduced to the last extremity by the besiegers, and that his capital city was likely to fall into their hands.

1. He attempted that which was bold and brave. He got together seven hundred choice men, and with them sallied out upon the entrenchments of the king of Edom, who being but a mercenary in this expedition, he hoped would not make any great resistance if he were vigorously attacked, and so he might make his escape that way. But it would not do, even the king of Edom proved too hard for him, and obliged him to retire, *ver. 26.*

2. This failing, he did that which was brutish and barbarous; he took his own son, his eldest son, that was to succeed him, than whom nothing could be more dear to himself and his people, and offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall, *ver. 27.* He designed by this, 1. To obtain the favour of Chemosh his god, which, being a devil, delighted in blood, and murder, and the destruction of mankind. The dearer any thing was to them, the more acceptable those idolaters thought it must needs be if offered in sacrifice to their gods, and therefore burnt their children in the fire to their honour. 2. To terrify the besiegers, and oblige them to retire.—Therefore he did it upon the wall, in their sight, that they might see what desperate courses he resolved to take rather than surrender, and how dear he would sell his city and life. He intended hereby to render them odious, and to exasperate and enrage his own subjects against them. This effect it had, there was great indignation against Israel for driving him to this extremity. Whereupon they raised the siege, and returned. Tender and generous spirits would not do that, though just, which will drive any man distracted, or make him desperate.

C H A P. IV.

Great service Elisha had done in the foregoing chapter for the three kings; to his prayers and prophecies they owed their lives and triumphs; now one would have expected that the next chapter should have told us what honours and what dignities were done to Elisha for this: that he should presently have been preferred at court, and made prime minister of state: that Jehoshaphat should have taken him home with him, and advanced him in his kingdom. No, the wife man delivered the army, but no man remembered the wife man, Eccl. ix. 15. Or if he had preferment offered him, he declined it: he preferred the honour of doing good in the schools of the prophets before that of being great in the courts of princes. God magnified him, and that justified him; magnified him indeed, for we have him here employed in working no less than five miracles. (1.) He multiplied the poor widow's oil, ver. 1—7. (2.) He obtained for the good Shunammite the blessing of a son in her old age, ver. 8—17. (3.) He raised that child to life when it was dead, ver. 18—37. (4.) He healed the deadly pottage, ver. 38—41. (5.) He fed a hundred men with twenty small loaves, ver. 42—44.

1. **N**OW there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets, unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant, my husband, is dead, and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. 2. And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil. 3. Then he said, Go borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels, borrow not a few. 4. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee, and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full. 5. So she went from him, and shut the door upon her, and upon her sons, who brought the vessels to her, and she poured out. 6. And it came to pass when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed. 7. Then she came and told the man of God: and he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.

Elisha's miracles were for use, not for shew; this here was so; an act of real charity; Christ's were so; not only great wonders, but great favours to them for whom they were wrought. God magnifies his goodness with his power.

1. Elisha readily receives a poor widow's complaint: She was a prophet's widow, to whom therefore should she apply herself, but to him that was a father to the sons of the prophets, and concerned himself in the concerns of their families. It seems the prophets had wives, as well as the priests, though prophecy went not by entail, as the priesthood did. Marriage is honourable in all, and not inconsistent with the most sacred professions. Now by the complaint of this poor woman, ver. 1. we are given to understand, (1.) That her husband being one of the sons of the prophets, was well known to Elisha. Ministers of eminent gifts and stations should make themselves familiar with those that are every way their inferiors, and know their character and state. (2.) That he had the reputation of a godly man. Elisha knew him to be one that feared the Lord, else he had been unworthy of the honour, and unfit for the work of a prophet. He was one that kept his integrity in a time of general apostasy; one of the seven thousand that had not bowed the knee to Baal. (3.) That he was dead, though a good man, a good minister. The prophets, do they live for ever? They that were clothed with the Spirit of prophecy, were not thereby armed against the stroke of death. (4.) That he died poor, and in debt more than he was worth. He did not contract his debts by prodigality, and luxury, and riotous living, for he was one that feared the Lord, and therefore durst not allow himself in such courses: nay, religion obligeth men not to live above what they have, nor to spend more than what God gives them, no not in expenses otherwise lawful; for thereby of necessity they must disable themselves at last to give every one their own, and so prove guilty of a continued act of injustice all along: yet it may be the lot of those that fear God to be in debt and insolvent; through cross providences, losses by sea, or bad debts, or their own imprudence; for the children of light are not always wise for this world. Perhaps this prophet was impoverished by persecution: when Jezebel ruled, prophets had much ado to live; and if they had families, could scarce make even. (5.) That the creditors were very severe to her. Two sons she had, to be the support of her widowed state, and their labour is reckoned assets in her hand, that must go therefore, and they must be bondmen for seven years, Exod. xxi. 2. to work out this debt. Those that leave their families under a load of debt disproportionable to their estates, know not what trouble they entail. In this distress the poor widow goes to Elisha, in dependance upon the promise, that the seed of the righteous shall not be forsaken. The generation of the upright may expect help from God's providence, and countenance from his prophets.

2. He effectually relieves this poor widow's distress, and puts her in a way both to pay her debt, and to maintain herself and her family. He did not say, *be warmed be filled*, but gave her real help. He did not give her some small matter for her present provision, but set her up in the world to sell oil, and put a stock under her hand to begin with. This was done by miracle, but it is an indication to us what is the best method of charity, and the greatest kindness one can do to poor people, which is, if possible, to help them into a way of improving what little they have by their own industry and ingenuity.

1. He directed her what to do; considered her case; *What shall I do for thee?* The sons of the prophets were poor, and it would signify little to make a collection for her among them: but the God of the holy prophets is able to supply all her needs; and if she has a little under her hands, it must be done by blessing and increasing that little. He therefore enquires what she had to make money of, and finds she had nothing to sell but one pot of oil, ver. 2. If she had had any plate or furniture, he would have

bid her part with it to enable her to be just to her creditors. We cannot reckon that really nor comfortably our own, but that which is so when all our debts are paid. If she had not had this pot of oil, the divine power could have supplied her: but having this, it will work upon this, and so teach us to make the best of what we have. The prophet, knowing her to have credit among her neighbours, bids her borrow of them empty vessels, ver. 3. for it seems she had sold her own towards the satisfying of her creditors. He directs her to shut the door upon her and her sons, while she filled all those vessels out of that one. She must shut the door, to prevent interruptions from the creditors and others while it was in the doing, that they might not seem proudly to boast of this miraculous supply, and that they might have opportunity for prayer and praise to God on this extraordinary occasion. Observe, 1. The oil was to be multiplied in the pouring, as the other widow's meal in the spending. The way to increase what we have, is to use it; to him that so hath, shall be given. It is not hoarding the talents, but trading with them, that doubles them. 2. It must be poured out by herself, not by Elisha or some of the sons of the prophets, to intimate, that it is upon our careful and diligent endeavours that we may expect the blessing of God to enrich us, both for this world and the other. What we have, will increase best in our own hand.

2. She did it accordingly. She did not tell the prophet he designed to make a fool of her, but firmly believing the divine power and goodness, and in pure obedience to the prophet, she borrowed vessels large and many of her neighbours, and poured out her oil into them; one of her sons was employed to bring her empty vessels, and the other carefully to set aside those that were full, while they were all amazed to find their pot, like a fountain of living water, always flowing, and yet always full; they see not the bubbling spring that supplies it, but believe it to be in him in whom all our springs are. Job's metaphor is now verified in the letter, Job xxix. 6. *The rock poured me out rivers of oil.* Perhaps this was in the tribe of Aser, part of whose blessing it was, that he should dip his foot in oil. Deut. xxxiii. 24.

3. The oil continued flowing as long as she had any empty vessels to receive it; when every vessel was full the oil stayed, ver. 6. for it was not fit this precious liquor should run over, and be as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again. Note, We are never straitened in God, and in his power and bounty, and the riches of his grace; all our straits are in ourselves. It is our faith that fails, not his promise. He gives above what we ask, were there more vessels there is enough in God to fill them; enough for all, enough for each. Was this pot of oil exhausted as long as there were any vessels to be filled from it; and shall we fear lest the golden oil which flows from the very root and fatness of the good olive, should fail, as long as there are any lamps to be supplied from it? Zech. iv. 12.

4. The prophet directed her what to do with the oil she had, ver. 7. She must not keep it for her own use, to make her face to shine. Those whom providence has made poor, must be content with poor accommodations for themselves, that is *knowing how to want*; and must not think when they get a little of that which is better than ordinary, to feed their own luxury: No: (1.) She must sell the oil to those that were rich, and could afford to bestow it on themselves. We may suppose, being produced by miracle, it was the best of its kind, like the wine, John ii. 10. so that she might have both a good price, and a quick market for it. Probably the merchants bought it to export, for oil was one of the commodities that Israel traded in, Ezek. xxvii. 17. (2.) She must pay her debt with the money she received for her oil. Though her creditors were too rigorous with her, yet they must not therefore lose their debt. Her first care, now she has where-withal, must be to discharge that, even before she makes any provision for her children. It is one of the fundamental laws of our religion, that we render to all their due, pay every just debt, give every body their own, though we leave never so little for ourselves; and this not of constraint, but willingly and without grudging: not only for wrath, to avoid being sued, but also for conscience sake. They that bear an honest mind, cannot with pleasure eat their daily bread, unless it be their own bread. (3.) The rest must not be laid up, but she and her children must live upon it, not upon the oil, but upon the money received from it, with which they must put themselves into a capacity of getting an honest livelihood. No doubt, she did as the man of God directed; and from hence, 1. Let those that are poor and in distress, be encouraged to trust God for supply in the way of duty, *verily thou shalt be fed*, though not feasted. It is true we cannot now expect miracles, yet we may expect mercies, if we wait on God, and seek to him. Let widows particularly, and prophets widows in a special manner, depend upon him to preserve them and their fatherless children alive, for to them he will be a husband, a father. 2. Let those whom God hath blessed with plenty use it for the glory of God, and under the direction of his word: Let them do justly with it, as this widow did, and serve God cheerfully in the use of it; and, as Elisha, be ready to do good to those that need us, be eyes to the blind and feet to the lame.

8. ¶ And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman, and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread. 9. And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. 10. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall, and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither. 11. And it fell on a day that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there. 12. And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him. 13. And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people. 14. And he said, What then is to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old. 15. And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door. 16. And he said, About this season, according to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, thou man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid. 17. And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that

that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.

The giving of a son to such as were old, and had been long childless, was an ancient instance of the divine power and favour, in the case of Abraham, and Isaac, and Manoah, and Elkanah; we find it here among the wonders wrought by Elisha: This was wrought in recompense for the kind entertainment which a good woman gave him, as the promise of a son was given to Abraham when he entertained angels. Observe here,

1. The kindness of the Shunammite woman to Elisha. Things are bad enough in Israel, yet not so bad, but that God's prophet finds friends wherever he goes. Shunem was a city in the tribe of Issachar, that lay in the road between Samaria and Carmel, a road that Elisha often travelled, as we find, *chap. ii. 25*. There lived a great woman, who kept a good house, and was very hospitable, her husband having a good estate, and his heart safely trusting in her, and in her discreet management, *Prov. xxi. 11*. So famous a man as Elisha could not pass or repass unobserved. Probably he had used to take some private obscure lodgings in the town; but this pious matron having notice once of his being there, pressed him with great importunity, and with much ado constrained him to dine with her, *ver. 8*. He was modest, and loth to be troublesome; humble, and affected not to associate with those of the first rank; so that it was not without some difficulty, that he was first drawn into an acquaintance there: But afterwards, whenever he came that way in his circuit, he constantly called there. So well pleased was she with her guest, and so desirous of his company, that she will not only bid him welcome to her table, but provide a lodging room for him in her house, that he might make the longer stay, not doubting but her house would be blessed for his sake; and all under her roof edified by his pious instructions and example; a good design, yet she will not do it without acquainting her husband, will neither lay out his money, nor invite strangers to his house, without his consent asked and obtained, *ver. 9, 10*. She suggests to him, 1. That the stranger she would invite was a holy man of God, who therefore would do good to their family, and God would recompense the kindness done to him; perhaps she had heard how well paid the widow of Sarepta was for entertaining Elijah. 2. That the kindness she intended him would be no great charge to them, she would build him only a little chamber; perhaps, she had no spare room in the house, or none private and retired enough for him, who spent much of his time in contemplation, and cared not for being disturbed with the noise of the family; the furniture shall be very plain, no costly hangings, no stands, no couches, no looking-glasses, but a bed and a table, a stool and a candlestick, all that was needful for his convenience, not only for his repose, but for his study, his reading and writing. Elisha seems mightily pleased with these accommodations, for he turned in and lay there, *ver. 11*. and as it should seem, his man in the same chamber, for he was far from taking state.

2. Elisha's gratitude for this kindness; being exceedingly pleased with the quietness of his apartment and the friendliness of his entertainment, he began to consider with himself what recompence he should make her. They that receive courtesies, should study to return them; it ill becomes men of God to be ungrateful or to sponge upon those that are generous.

(1.) He offers to use his interest for her in the king's court, *ver. 13*. *Thou hast been careful for us with all this care*, thus doth he magnify the kindness he received, as those that are humble use to do, though in the purse of one so rich, and in the breast of one so free, it was as nothing; now *what shall be done for thee?* As the liberal deviseth liberal things, so the grateful deviseth grateful things. *Wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or the captain of the host?* for an office for thine husband, civil or military? Hast thou any complaint to make, any petition to present, any suit at law depending, that needs the countenance of the higher powers? Wherein can I serve thee? It seems, Elisha had got such an interest by his late services, that though he minded not to prefer himself by it, yet he was capable of preferring his friends; a good man can take as much pleasure in serving others, as in raising himself. But she needs not any good offices of this kind to be done for her, *I dwell, (saith she) among mine own people, i. e. we are well as we are, and do not aim at preferment; it is a happiness to dwell among our own people,* that love and respect us, and to whom we are in a capacity of doing good, and a greater happiness to be content to do so, to be easy, and to know when we are well; why should those that live comfortably among their own people, covet to live delicately in kings palaces? It would be well with many, if they did but know when they are well. Some years after this, we find this Shunammite had occasion to be spoken for to the king, though now she needed it not, *chap. viii. 3, 4*. Those that dwell among their own people, yet must not think their mountain stands so strong as that it cannot be moved; they may be driven, as this good woman was, to sojourn among strangers: our continuing city is above.

(2.) He did use his interest for her in the court of heaven, which was far better; Elisha consulted with his servant what kindness he should do for her, such a freedom did this great prophet admit even his servant to; Gehazi tells him she is childless, has a great estate, but no son to leave it to, and was past hopes of having any, her husband is old; if Elisha can obtain this favour from God for her, it will be the removal of that which at present was her only grievance; those are the most welcome kindnesses which are most suited to our necessities. He sent for her immediately, she very humbly and respectfully stood in the door, *ver. 15*. according to her accustomed modesty, and then he assured her, that within a year she should bring forth a son, *ver. 16*. She had received this prophet in the name of a prophet, and now she had not a courtier's reward, in being spoken for to the king, but a prophet's reward, a signal mercy given by prophets, and in answer to prayer; the promise was a surprise to her, and she begs the may not be flattered by it, *Nay, my lord, thou art a man of God*, and therefore, I hope, speakest seriously, and dost not jest with me, nor lie unto thy handmaid; the event, within the time limited, confirmed the truth of the promise, *she bare a son* at the season that Elisha spoke of, *ver. 17*. God built up her house in reward of her kindness in building the prophet a chamber; we may well imagine what joy this brought to the family; *sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear*.

18. ¶ And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. 19. And he said unto his father, My head, my head.' And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. 20. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died. 21. And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out. 22. And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and

come again. 23. And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to him to-day? *it is neither new-moon, nor sabbath*. And she said, *It shall be well*. 24. Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward? slack not thy riding for me, except I bid thee. 25. So she went, and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel: and it came to pass when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, yonder is that Shunammite: 26. Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, *Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?* And she answered, *It is well*. 27. And when she came to the man of God to the hill, he caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone, for her soul is vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid it from me, and hath not told me: 28. Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? Did I not say, Do not deceive me? 29. Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child. 30. And the mother of the child said, *As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee*. And he arose, and followed her. 31. And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child, but there was neither voice, nor hearing: wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked. 32. And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. 33. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD. 34. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, and he stretched himself upon the child, and the flesh of the child waxed warm. 35. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro, and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes. 36. And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her: and when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son. 37. Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

We may well suppose, after the birth of this son, that the prophet was doubly welcome to the good Shunammite: he had thought himself indebted to her, but from henceforth, as long as she lives, she will think herself in his debt, and that she can never do too much for him; we suppose the child very dear to the prophet, as the son of his prayers, and very dear to the parents, as the son of their old age. But here is,

1. The sudden death of the child, though so much a darling; he is so far past the perils of infancy, that he is able to go to the field to his father, who, no doubt, is pleased with his pretty talk, and his joy of his son is greater than the joy of his harvest; but either the cold or the heat of the open field overcame the child, that was bred tenderly, and he complains to his father that his head aches, *ver. 19*. Whither should we go with our complaints but to our heavenly Father? Thither the Spirit of adoption brings believers with all their grievances, all their desires, teaching them to cry, with groanings that cannot be uttered, *My head, my head; my heart, my heart*. The father sends him to his mother's arms, his mother's lap, little suspecting any danger in his indisposition, but hoping he will drop asleep in his mother's bosom, and wake well; but it proves fatal, he sleeps the sleep of death, *ver. 20*. well in the morning, and dead by noon, all the mother's care and tenderness cannot keep him alive; this a child of promise, a child of prayer, and given in love, yet taken away; little children lie open to the arrests of sickness and death; but how admirably doth the prudent pious mother keep her tongue under this surprising affliction, not one peevish indecent word comes from her, she has a strong belief that the child will be raised to life again: like a genuine daughter of Abraham's faith as well as loins, she accounts that God is able to raise him from the dead, for from thence she received him in a figure, *Heb. xi. 19*. She had heard of raising of the widow's son of Sarepta, and that the spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha, and such confidence had she of God's goodness, that she was very apt to believe, he that so soon took away what he had given, would restore what he had now taken away; by this faith, *women received their dead raised to life*, *Heb. xi. 35*. In this faith, she makes no preparation for the burial of her dead child, but for its resurrection, for she lays him on the prophet's bed, *ver. 21*. expecting that he would stand her friend; *O woman, great is thy faith!* he that wrought it, would not frustrate it.

2. The sorrowful mother's application to the prophet on this sad occasion, for it happened very opportunely that he was now at the college upon mount Carmel, not far off.

(1.) She begged leave of her husband to go to the prophet, yet not acquainting him with her errand, lest he should not have faith enough to let her go, *ver. 22*. he objected, *it is neither new-moon nor sabbath*, *ver. 23*. which intimates, that on those feasts of the Lord, she used to go to his meeting, with other good people, to hear the word, and to join with him in prayers and praises; she did not think it enough to have his help sometimes in her own family, but though a great woman, attended on public worship, for which this was none of the times appointed, wherefore, faith the husband, why wilt thou go to-day? what is the matter? no harm, faith she, *It shall be well*, so you will say yourself hereafter; see how this husband and wife vied respects, she was so dutiful to him, that she would not go till she had acquainted him with her journey, and he so loving to her, that he would not oppose it, though she did not think fit to acquaint him with her business.

(2.) She made all the haste she could to the prophet, *ver. 24*. and he

seeing her at a distance, sent his servant to enquire whether any thing was amiss, *ver. 25, 26.* The question was particular, *Is it well with thee? is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child?* Note, It well becomes the men of God with tenderness and concern, to enquire about the welfare of their friends, and their families; the answer was general. *It is well.* Gehazi was not the man that she came to complain to, and therefore she puts him off with this; she said little, and little said is soon amended, *Psal. xxxix. 1, 2.* but what she did say was very patient, it is well with me, with my husband, with the child, all well, and yet the child was dead in the house. Note, When God calls away our dearest relations by death, it becomes us quietly to say, it is well both with us and them, it is well, for all is well that God doth, all is well with them that are gone, if they are gone to heaven, and all well with us that stay behind, if by the affliction we are furthered in our way thither.

(3.) When she came to the prophet, she humbly reasoned with him concerning her present affliction, she threw herself at his feet, as one troubled and in grief, which she never shewed till she came to him that she believed he could help her, *ver. 27.* When her passion would do her service, she knew how to discover it, as well as how to conceal it when it would do her disservice; Gehazi knew his master would not be pleased to see her lie at his feet, and therefore would have raised her up, but Elisha waited to hear from her, since he might not hear immediately from God, what was the cause of her trouble; God discovered things to his prophets as he saw fit, not always as they desired, God did not shew this to the prophet, because he might know it from the good woman herself: what she said was very pathetic; she appeals to the prophet, 1. Concerning her indifference to this mercy which was now taken from her, *Did I desire a son of my lord?* No, thou knowest I did not; it was thine own proposal, not mine, I did not fret for the want of a son, as Hannah, nor beg, as Rachel, *Give me children, or else I die.* Note, When any creature-comfort is taken from us, it is well if we can say through grace that we did not set our hearts inordinately upon it, for if we did, we have reason to fear it was given in anger, and taken away in wrath. 2. Concerning her entire dependence upon the prophet's word, *did I not say, Do not deceive me?* yes, she said so, *ver. 16.* and this reflection upon it may be considered either, (1.) As quarrelling with the prophet for deceiving her; she was ready to think herself mocked with the mercy, when it was so soon removed, and that it had been better she had never had this child, than to be deprived of him when she began to have comfort in him. Note, The loss of a mercy should not make us undervalue the gift of it; or, (2.) As pleading with the prophet for the raising of the child to life again, *I said, Do not deceive me,* and I know thou wilt not. Note, However the providence of God may disappoint us, we may be sure the promise of God never did nor ever will deceive us; hope in that will not make us ashamed.

3. The raising of the child to life again; we may suppose, that the woman gave Elisha a more express account of the child's death, and he gave her a more express promise of his resurrection than is here related, where we are briefly told,

1. That Elisha sent Gehazi to go in all haste to the dead child, gave him his staff, and bid him lay that on the face of the child, *ver. 29.* I know not what to make of this; Elisha knew that Elijah raised the dead child with a very close application, stretching himself upon the child, and praying again and again, and could he think to raise this child by so slight a ceremony as this, especially when nothing hindered but he might come himself? Shall such a power as this be delegated, and to no better a man than Gehazi? Bishop Hall suggests that it was done out of human conceit, and not by divine instinct, and therefore it failed of the effect; God will not have such great favours made too cheap, nor shall they be too easily come by, lest they be undervalued.

2. The woman resolves not to go back without the prophet himself, *ver. 30. I will not leave thee.* She had no great expectation from the staff, she will have the hand, and she was in the right of it; perhaps it was intended hereby to teach us not to put that confidence in creatures that are servants, which the power of the Creator, their Master and ours, will alone bear the weight of. Gehazi returns *re infecta*, without the tidings of any sign of life in the child, *ver. 31.* The child is not awaked, intimating, to the comfort of the mother, that its death was but a sleep, and that he expected it would shortly be awaked. In the raising of dead souls to spiritual life, ministers can do no more by their own power than Gehazi here could, they lay the word, like the prophet's staff, before their faces, but there is neither voice nor hearing, till Christ by his Spirit comes himself, the letter alone kills, it is the Spirit that gives life; it is not prophesying upon dry bones that will put life into them, breath must come from heaven and breathe upon those slain.

3. The prophet, by earnest prayer, obtains from God the restoring of this dead child to life again; he found the child dead upon his own bed, *ver. 32. shut the door upon them twain,* *ver. 33.* even the dead child is spoken of as a person, one of the twain, for it was still in being, and not lost; he shut out all company, that he might not seem to glory in the power God had given him, or to use it for ostentation, and to be seen of men.

Observe, (1.) How closely the prophet applied himself to this great operation; perhaps being sensible that he had tempted God too much, in thinking to effect by the staff in Gehazi's hand, for which he thought himself rebuked by the disappointment, he now finds it a harder task than he then thought, and therefore addresseth himself to it with great solemnity. (1.) He prayed unto the Lord, *ver. 33.* probably, as Elijah had done, *Let this child's soul come into him again.* Christ raised the dead to life as one having authority, *Dan'el, arise; Young man, I say unto thee, Arise; Lazarus, come forth:* for he was powerful and faithful as a Son, the Lord of life, but Elijah and Elisha did it by petition as servants. 2. He lay upon the child, *ver. 34.* as if he would communicate to him some of his vital heat or spirits; thus he expressed the earnestness of his desire, and gave a sign of that divine power which he depended upon for the accomplishment of this great work; he first put his mouth to the child's mouth, as if in God's name he would breathe into him the breath of life; then his eyes to the child's eyes, to open them again to the light of life; then his hands to the child's hands, to put strength into them. He then returned and walked in the house, as one full of care and concern, and wholly intent upon what he was about; then he went up stairs again, and the second time stretched himself upon the child, *ver. 35.* Those that would be instrumental in conveying spiritual life to dead souls, must thus affect themselves with their case, and accommodate themselves to it, and labour fervently in prayer for them.

(2.) How gradually the operation was performed; at the first application, the flesh of the child waxed warm, *ver. 34.* which gave the prophet encouragement to continue instant in prayer; after a while, the child sneezed seven times, which was an indication not only of life, but liveliness; some have reported it as an ancient tradition, That when God breathed into Adam the breath of life, the first evidence of his being alive was sneezing, which gave rise to the usage of paying respect to those that sneeze. Some observe here, that sneezing clears the head, and there lay the child's distemper.

(3.) How joyfully the child was returned alive to his mother, *ver. 36, 37.*

and all parties concerned were not a little comforted, *Acts xx. 12.* See the power of God, who kills and makes alive again; see the power of prayer, as it has the key of the clouds, so it has the key of death; see the power of faith; that fixed law of nature, that death is a way whence there is no returning, shall rather be dispensed with, than this believing Shunamite shall be disappointed.

38. ¶ And Elisha came again to Gilgal, and there was a dearth in the land, and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and seethe pottage for the sons of the prophets. 39. And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap-full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not. 40. So they poured out for the men to eat: and it came to pass as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out; and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot: and they could not eat thereof. 41. But he said, Then bring meal: and he cast it into the pot: and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat: and there was no harm in the pot. 42. ¶ And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the first-fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof: and he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat. 43. And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof. 44. So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD.

We have here Elisha in this place in his element, among the sons of the prophets, teaching them, and, as a father, providing for them, and happy it was for them that they had one over them, who naturally cared for their state, under whom they were well fed and well taught; there was a dearth in the land, for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein, the same that we read of, *chap. viii. 1.* it continued seven years, just as long again as that in Elijah's time; a famine of bread there was, but not of hearing the word of God, for Elisha had the sons of the prophets sitting before him to hear his wisdom, who were taught that they might teach others. Two instances we have here of the care he took about their meat. Christ twice fed those whom he preached to; Elisha was in the more care about it now because of the dearth, that the sons of the prophets might not be ashamed in this evil time, but even in the days of famine might be satisfied, *Psal. xxxvii. 19.*

1. He made hurtful food to become safe and wholesome.

(1.) On the lecture day, the sons of the prophets being all to attend, he ordered his servant to provide food for their bodies, while he was breaking to them the bread of life for their souls; whether there was any flesh-meat for them doth not appear, he orders only that pottage should be fetched for them of herbs, *ver. 38.* The sons of the prophets should be examples of temperance and mortification, not desirous of dainties, but content with plain food; if they have neither savoury meats, nor sweet meats, nay, if a mess of pottage be all the dinner, let them remember this great prophet dined himself and his guests no better.

(2.) One of the servitors that was sent to gather herbs, (which, it should seem, must serve instead of flesh for the pottage) by mistake brought in that which was noxious, or at least very nauseous, and shred it into the pottage, wild gourds they are called, *ver. 39.* Some think it was *coloquintida*, an herb that purgeth strongly, and if not qualified, is dangerous; the sons of the prophets, it seems, were better skilled in divinity than in natural philosophy, and read their Bibles more than their Herbals. If any of the fruits of the earth be hurtful, we must look upon it as an effect of the curse, *thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee*, for the original blessing made all good.

(3.) The guests complained to Elisha of the unwholesomeness of their food; nature has given man the sense of tasting, not only that wholesome food may be pleasant, but that that which is unwholesome may be discovered before it comes to the stomach; the mouth tries meat by tasting it, *Job xii. 11.* This pottage was soon found by the taste of it to be dangerous, so that they cried out, *there is death in the pot*, *ver. 40.* The table often becomes a snare, and that which should be for our welfare proves a trap, which is a good reason why we should not feed ourselves without fear; when we are receiving the supports and comforts of life we must keep up an expectation of death and a fear of sin.

(4.) Elisha presently cured the ill taste, and prevented the ill consequences of this unwholesome pottage; as before he had healed the bitter waters with salt, so now the bitter broth by meal, *ver. 41.* It is likely there was meal in it before, but that was put in by a common hand only to thicken the pottage, this was the same thing, but cast in by Elisha's hand, and with intent to heal the pottage; by which it appears that the change was not owing to the meal, (that was the sign only, not the means) but to the divine power: now all was well, not only no death, but no harm in the pot; we must acknowledge God's goodness in making our food wholesome and nourishing; *I am the Lord that healeth thee.*

2. He made a little food to go a great way.

1. Elisha had a present brought him of twenty barley loaves and some ears of corn, *ver. 42.* a present which in those ages would not be despicable at any time, but now in a special manner valuable, when there was a dearth in the land. It is said to be of the first fruits, which was God's due out of their increase; and when the priests and Levites were all at Jerusalem, out of their reach, the religious people among them, with good reason, looked upon the prophets as God's receivers, and brought their first-fruits to them, which helped to maintain their schools.

2. Having freely received he freely gave, ordering it all to be set before the sons of the prophets, reserving none for himself, none for hereafter, *let the morrow take care for the things of itself*, give it all to the people that they may eat; it well becomes the men of God to be generous and open-handed, and the fathers of the prophets to be liberal to the sons of the prophets.

4. Though the loaves were little, it is likely, no more than what one man would ordinarily eat at a meal, yet with twenty of them he filled a hundred men, *ver. 43, 44.* His servant thought to set so little meat before

so many men was but to tantalize them, and shame his master for making so great an invitation to short commons, but he in God's name pronounced it a full meal for them, and so it proved; they did eat, and left thereof, not because their stomachs failed them, but because the bread increased in he eating; God has promised his church, *Psal. cxxxii. 15. that he will abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread*; for whom he feeds he fills, and what he blesteth comes to much, as what he blows upon comes to little, *Hagg. i. 9.* Christ's feeding his hearers was a miracle far beyond this, but both teach us that those who wait upon God in the way of duty, may hope to be both protected and supplied by a particular care of divine providence.

C H A P. V.

Two more of Elisha's miracles are recorded in this chapter. 1. *The cleansing of Naaman, a Syrian, a stranger, from his leprosy, and there, (1.) The badness of his case, ver. 1. (2.) The providences that brought him to Elisha, the intelligence given him by a captive maid, ver. 2-4. A letter from the king of Syria to the king of Israel to introduce him, ver. 5-7. And the invitation Elisha sent him, ver. 8. (3.) The method prescribed for his cure; his submission with much ado to that method, and his cure thereby, ver. 9-14. (4.) The grateful acknowledgments he made to Elisha hereupon, ver. 15-19. 2. The smiting of Gehazi, his own servant, with that leprosy, (1.) Gehazi's sins, which were belying his master to Naaman, ver. 20-24. and lying to his master when he examined him, ver. 25. (2.) His punishment for this sin, Naaman's leprosy was entailed on his family, ver. 26, 27. And if Naaman's cure was typical of the calling of the Gentiles, as our Saviour seems to make it, *Luke iv. 27.* Gehazi's stroke may be looked upon as typical of the blinding and rejecting of the Jews, who envied God's grace to the Gentiles, as Gehazi envied Elisha's favour to Naaman.*

1. **N**OW Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper. 2. And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. 3. And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria: for he would recover him of his leprosy. 4. And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel. 5. And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. 6. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy. 7. And it came to pass when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me. 8. ¶ And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

Our saviour's miracles were intended for the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet one, like a crumb, fell from the table to a woman of Canaan, so this one miracle Elisha wrought for Naaman a Syrian; for God doth good to all, and will have all men to be saved. Here is,

1. The great affliction Naaman was under in the midst of all his honours, ver. 1. He was a great man, in a great place, not only rich and raised, but particularly happy for two things, (1.) That he had been very serviceable to his country, God made him so: by him the Lord had often given deliverance to Syria, success in their wars even with Israel. The preservation and prosperity even of those that do not know God and serve him must be ascribed to him, for he is the saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe. Let Israel know, that when the Syrians prevailed it was from the Lord. (2.) That he was very acceptable to his prince, was his favourite, and prime minister of state; so great was he, so high, so honourable, and a mighty man of valour, but he was a leper, was under that loathsome disease which made him a burthen to himself. Note, 1. No man's greatness, or honour, or interest, valour or victory, can set him out of the reach of the worst calamities of human life; there is many a sickly crazy body under rich and gay cloathing. 2. Every man has some but or other in his character, something that blemisheth and diminisheth him, some allay to his grandeur, some damp to his joy, very happy, very good, yet in something or other not so good as he should be, not so happy as he would be; Naaman was as great as the world could make him, and yet (as Bishop Hall expresseth it) the basest slave in Syria would not change skins with him.

2. The notice that was given of Elisha's power by a little maid that waited on his lady, ver. 2, 3. This maid was by birth an Israelite, providentially carried captive into Syria, and there preferred into Naaman's family, where she published Elisha's fame, to the honour of Israel, and Israel's God; the unhappy dispersing of the people of God hath sometimes proved the happy occasion of the diffusion of the knowledge of God, *Acts viii. 4.* This little maid, (1.) as became a true-born Israelite, consulted the honour of her country, could give an account, though but a girl, of the famous prophet they had among them; children should betimes acquaint

themselves with the wondrous works of God, that wherever they go they may have them to talk of. See *Psal. viii. 2.* (2.) As became a good servant she desired the health and welfare of her master, though she was a captive, a servant by force, much more should servants of choice seek their master's good, the Jews in Babylon were to seek the peace of the land of their captivity, *Jer. xxi. 7.* Elisha had not cleansed any lepers in Israel, (*Luke iv. 27.*) yet this little maid, from the other miracles he had wrought, infers that he could cure her master, and from his common beneficence infers that he would do it, though he was a Syrian; servants may be blessings to the families where they are, by telling what they know of the glory of God and the honour of his prophets.

3. The application which the king of Syria hereupon made to the king of Israel on Naaman's behalf; Naaman took notice of the intelligence, though given by a little maid, and did not despise it for the sake of her meanness when it tended to his bodily health; he did not say, the girl talks like a fool, how can any prophet of Israel do that for me which all the physicians of Syria have attempted in vain? Though he neither loved nor honoured the Jewish nation, yet if one of that nation can but cure him of his leprosy he will be his humble servant. O that they who are spiritually diseased would hearken thus readily to the tidings brought them of the great physician!

See what Naaman did upon this little hint, (1.) He would not send for the prophet to come to him, but such honour would he pay to one that had so much of a divine power with him as to be able to cure diseases, that he would go to him himself, though he himself was sickly, unfit for society, the journey long, and into an enemy's country; princes, he thinks, must stoop to prophets when they need them. (2.) He could not go incognito and indistinctly, though his errand proclaimed his loathsome disease, but went in state, and with a great retinue, to do the more honour to the prophet. (3.) He would not go empty-handed, but took with him gold, and silver, and raiment, to present to his physician; those that have wealth and want health, shew which they reckon the more valuable blessing; what will they not give for ease, and strength, and soundness of body? (4.) He would not go without a letter to the king of Israel from the king his master, who did himself earnestly desire his recovery; he knows not where in Samaria to find this wonder-working prophet, but takes it for granted the king knows where to find him, and to engage the prophet to do his utmost for Naaman, he shall come to him supported with the interest of two kings; if the king of Syria must intreat his help, he hopes the king of Israel, being his liege-lord, may command it; the gifts of the subject must all be (he thinks) for the service and honour of the prince, and therefore desires the king that he would recover the leper, ver. 6. taking it for granted, there was a greater intimacy between the king and the prophet than really there was.

4. The alarm this gave to the king of Israel, ver. 7. He apprehended there was in this letter, (1.) A great affront upon God, and therefore he rent his clothes, according to the custom of the Jews, when they heard or read that which they thought blasphemous, and what less could it be, than to attribute to him a divine power? *Am I God, to kill whom I will, and make alive whom I will!* No, I pretend not to such an authority; Nebuchadnezzar did, as we find, *Dan. v. 19.* *Am I a God, to kill with a word, and make alive with a word?* No, I pretend not to such a power; thus this great man, this bad man, is made to own that he is but a man: Why did he not with this consideration correct himself for his idolatry, and reason thus? Shall I worship those as gods, that can neither kill nor make alive? can do neither good nor evil? (2.) An ill design upon himself; he appeals to those about for him for this, *see how he seeketh a quarrel against me*; he requires me to recover the leper, and if I do not, though I cannot, he will make that a pretence to wage war with me, which he suspects the rather, because Naaman was his general. Had he rightly understood the meaning of the letter, that when the king wrote to him to recover the leper, he meant, that he would take care he might be recovered, he had not been in this fright. Note, We often create a great deal of uneasiness to ourselves, by misinterpreting the words and actions of others that are well intended; it is charity to ourselves to think no evil. If he had bethought himself of Elisha, and his power, he would easily have understood the letter, and have known what he had to do, but he is put into this confusion, by making himself a stranger to the prophet; the captive maid had him more in her thoughts than the king had.

5. The proffer which Elisha made of his service; he was willing to do any thing to make his prince easy, though he was neglected, and his former good services forgotten by him; hearing on what occasion the king had rent his clothes, he sent to him, to let him know, that if his patient would come to him, he would not lose his labour, ver. 8. *he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel*, and it were sad with Israel if there were not; that there is a prophet in Israel, who can do that which the king of Israel dare not attempt, which the prophets of Syria cannot pretend to; it was not for his own honour, but for the honour of God, that he coveted to make them all know, that there is a prophet in Israel, though obscure and overlooked.

9. So Naaman came with his horses, and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. 10. And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. 11. But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. 12. Are not Arbana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage. 13. And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean? 14. Then went he down, and dipped himself, seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

We have here the cure of Naaman's leprosy.

1. The short and plain direction which the prophet gave him, with assurance of success. Naaman designed to do honour to Elisha, when he came in his chariot, and with all his retinue to Elisha's door, ver. 4. They that shewed little respect to prophets at other times, when they needed them were very complaisant to them, he attended at Elisha's door as a beggar for an alms; they that would be cleansed of their spiritual leprosy, must wait at

wisdom's gate, and watch at the posts of her doors. Naaman expected to have his compliment returned, but Elisha gave him his answer without any formality, would not go to the door to him, lest he should seem too much pleased with the honour done him, but sent a messenger to him, bidding him *Go wash in Jordan seven times*, and promising him, that if he did so his disease should be cured; the promise was very express, *Thou shalt be clean*; the method proposed was plain, *Go wash in Jordan*; this was not intended as any means of the cure, though cold bathing is recommended by many as a very wholesome thing, yet some think in the case of a leprosy it was rather hurtful; but it was intended as a sign of the cure, and a trial of his obedience; they that will be helped of God, must do as they are bidden. But why did Elisha send a messenger to him with these directions? 1. Because he was retired at this time for devotion, was intent upon his prayers for the cure; and would not be diverted; or, 2. Because he knew Naaman to be a proud man, and he would let him know, that before the great God all men stand upon the same level.

2. Naaman's disgust at the method prescribed, because it was not what he expected; two things disgusted him. (1.) That Elisha, as he thought, put a slight upon his person, in sending him orders by a servant, and not coming to him himself, *ver. 11.* Being big with the expectation of a cure, he had been fancying how this cure would be wrought, and the scheme he had laid was this, *he will surely come out to me*, that is the least he can do to me a peer of Syria, to me, that am come to him in all this state, to me that have so often been victorious over Israel; *he will stand, and call on the name of his God*, and name me in his prayer, and then he will wave his hand over the place, and so effect the cure; and because the thing is not done thus, he falls into a passion, forgetting, 1. That he was a leper, and the law of Moses, which Elisha would religiously observe, shut those out from society; a leper, and therefore ought not to insist upon the punctilios of honour. Note, Many have hearts unhumiliated under humbling providences, see *Numb. xii. 14.* 2. That he was a petitioner, suing for a favour which he could not demand, and beggars must not be choosers, patients must not prescribe to their physician: see in Naaman the folly of pride; a cure will not content him, unless he be cured with ceremony, with a great deal of pomp and parade; he scorns to be healed, unless he be humoured. (2.) That Elisha, as he thought, put a slight upon his country; he took it hainously that he must be sent to wash in Jordan, a river in Israel; when he thought *Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel*; how magnificently doth he speak of these two rivers that watered Damascus, which soon after fell into one, called by geographers *Chrysorhous*, The golden stream; how scornfully doth he speak of all the waters of Israel, though God had called the land of Israel the glory of all lands, and particularly, for its *brooks of water*, *Deut. viii. 7.* so common it is for God and man to differ in their judgments; how slightly doth he speak of the prophet's directions? *may I not wash in them, and be clean?* he might wash in them, and be clean from dirt, but not wash in them, and be clean from leprosy. He was angry that the prophet bid him wash and be clean, he thought the prophet must do all, and is not pleased that he is bid to do any thing; or he thinks this too cheap, too plain, too common a thing for so great a man to be cured by; or he did not believe it would at all effect the cure, or if it would, what medical virtue was there in Jordan more than in the rivers of Damascus? But he did not consider, 1. That Jordan belonged to Israel's God, from whom he was to expect the cure, and not from the gods of Damascus; it watered the Lord's land, the holy land, and, in a miraculous cure, relations to God was much more considerable than the depth of the channel or the beauty of the stream. 2. That Jordan had more than once before this obeyed the commands of Omnipotence, it had of old yielded a passage to Israel, and of late to Elijah and Elisha, and therefore was fitter for such a person than those rivers; that he only observed the common law of their creation, and had never been thus distinguished; but above all, Jordan was the river appointed, and if he expected a cure from the divine power, he ought to acquiesce in the divine will without asking why or wherefore. Note, It is common for those that are wise in their own conceits, to look with contempt on the dictates and prescriptions of divine wisdom, and to prefer their own fancies before them; they that are for *establishing their own righteousness*, will not submit to the *righteousness of God*, *Rom. x. 3.*

Naaman talked himself into such a heat, (as passionate men use to do) then he turned away from the prophet's door in a rage, ready to swear he would never have any thing more to say to Elisha; and who then would be the loser? Note, *They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercies*, *Jonah ii. 8.* Proud men are the worst enemies to themselves, and foreclose their own redemption.

3. The modest advice which his servants gave him, to observe the prophet's prescriptions, with an implicit reproof of his resentments, *ver. 13.* Though at other times they kept their distance, and now saw him in a passion, yet knowing him to be a man that would hear reason at any time and from any body, (a good character of great men, and a very rare one) they drew near, and made bold to argue the matter a little with him. They had conceived a great opinion of the prophet, (having, perhaps, heard more of him from the common people, whom they had conversed with, than Naaman had heard from the king and courtiers, whom he had conversed with) and therefore begged him to consider: *If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, had ordered thee into a tedious course of physic, or to submit to some painful operation, supposing blistering, or cupping, or salivating, Wouldst thou not have done it? no doubt thou wouldst.* And wilt thou not submit to so easy a method as this, *wash and be clean?*

Observe, (1.) His own servants gave him this reproof and counsel, which was no more disparagement to him, than that he had intelligence of one that could cure him from his wife's maid, *ver. 2.* Note, It is a great mercy to have those about us, that will be free with us, and faithfully tell us of our faults and follies, though they be our inferiors. Masters must be willing to hear reason from their servants, *Job xxxi. 12, 13.* As we should be deaf to the counsel of the ungodly, though given by the most great and venerable names; so we should have our ear open to good advice, though brought us by those who are much below us: no matter who speaks it, if it be well said.

(2.) The reproof was very modest and respectful; they call him father; for servants must honour and obey their masters with a kind of filial affection. In giving reproof and counsel, we must make it appear that it comes from love and true honour, and we intend not reproach, but reformation.

(3.) It was very rational and considerate. If the rude and unthinking servants had stirred up their master's angry resentments, and offered to revenge his quarrel upon the prophet, who (he thought) affronted him, how all had the consequences been: fire from heaven sure upon them all! But they, to our great surprise, took the prophet's part. Elisha, (though it is likely, he perceived how what he had said had put Naaman out of humour,) yet did not take care to pacify him; it was at his peril, if he persisted in his wrath: but his servants are made use of by providence to reduce him to temper. They reason with him, 1. From his earnest desire of a

cure, *Wouldst thou not do any thing?* Note, When diseased sinners are come to this, that they are content to do any thing, to submit to any thing, to part with any thing for a cure, then and not till then there begins to be some hopes of them. Then they will take Christ on his own terms. 2. From the easiness of the method prescribed; it is but wash and be clean. Sir, it is but trying, the experiment is cheap and easy, it can do no hurt, but may do good. Note, The methods prescribed for healing the leprosy of sin are so plain, that we are utterly inexcusable if we do not observe them. It is but believe and be saved, repent and be pardoned, wash and be clean.

4. The cure effected in the use of the means prescribed, *ver. 14.* Naaman, upon second thoughts, yielded to make the experiment, yet, it should seem, with no great faith or resolution, for whereas the prophet bid him wash in Jordan seven times, he did but dip himself so many times, as lightly as he could. However God is pleased so far to honour himself and his word, as to make that effectual. *His flesh came again like the flesh of a child*, to his great surprise and joy. This men get by yielding to the will of God, by attending to his instructions. His being cleansed by washing, put an honour on the law for cleansing lepers: God will magnify his word, above all his name.

15. ¶ And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that *there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel*: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant. 16. But he said, *As the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none.* And he urged him to take it, but he refused. 17. And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules burthen of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering, nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD. 18. In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon; when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing. 19. And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.

Of the ten lepers that our Saviour cleansed, the only one that returned to give thanks, was a Samaritan, *Luke xvii. 16.* This Syrian did so, who here speaks himself.

1. Convinced of the power of the God of Israel, not only that he is God, but that he is God alone, and that indeed, *there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel*, *ver. 15.* A noble confession, but such as speaks the misery of the Gentile world; for the nations that had many gods, really had no God, but were without God in the world. He had sometimes thought the gods of Syria gods indeed, but now experience had rectified his mistake, and he knew Israel's God was God alone, the sovereign Lord of all. Had he seen other lepers cleansed, perhaps it had not convinced him, but the mercy of the cure affected him more than the miracle of it. Those are best able to speak of the power of divine grace, who have themselves experienced it.

2. Grateful to Elisha the prophet; therefore for his sake whose servant thou art, I have a present for thee, silver, and gold, and raiment, whatever thou wilt please to accept. He valued the cure, not by the easiness of it to the prophet, but the acceptableness of it to himself, and would gladly pay for it accordingly. But Elisha generously refused the fee, though urged to accept it; and, to prevent farther importunity, backed this refusal with an oath, *As the LORD liveth I will receive none*, *ver. 16.* not because he did not need it, for he was poor enough, and knew what to do with it, and how to bestow it among the sons of the prophets; nor because he thought it unlawful, for he received presents from others, but he would not be beholden to this Syrian, nor should he say, *I have made Elisha rich*, *Gen. xiv. 23.* It would be much for the honour of God to shew this new convert, that the servants of the God of Israel were taught to look upon the wealth of this world with a holy contempt, which would confirm him in his belief, that *there is no God but in Israel*. See *1 Cor. xi. 9.*

3. Profelyted to the worship of the God of Israel. He will not only offer a sacrifice to the Lord in thanks for his present cure, but he resolves he will never offer sacrifice to any other gods, *ver. 17.* It was a happy cure of his leprosy, which cured him of his idolatry, a more dangerous disease. But here are two instances of his weakness and infirmity in his conversion.

(1.) In one instance he over-did it, that he would not only worship the God of Israel, but he would have clods of earth out of the prophet's garden, or at least of the prophet's ordering him, to *make an altar of*, *ver. 17.* He that a while ago had spoken very slightly of the *waters of Israel*, *ver. 12.* now is in another extreme, and overvalues the earth of Israel, supposing, (since God had appointed *altars of earth*, *Exod. xx. 24.*) an altar of that earth would be most acceptable to him; not considering, that all the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. Or perhaps the transport of his affection and veneration for the prophet, not only upon the account of his power, but of his virtue and generosity, made him, as we say, love the very ground he went upon, and desire to have some of it home with him. The modern compliment equivalent to this would be, Pray, Sir, let me have your picture.

(1.) In another instance he under-did it; that he reserved to himself a liberty to bow in the house of Rimmon, in compliance to the king his master, and according to the duty of his place at court, *ver. 18.* in this thing he must be excused. He owns he ought not to do it, but that he cannot otherwise keep his place; protests his bowing is not, nor ever shall be, as it had been, in honour to the idol, but only in honour to the king; and therefore he hopes God will forgive him. Perhaps, all things considered, this might be excusable in Naaman, though not justifiable: But as to us, I am sure, 1. If in covenanting with God, we make a reservation for any known sin, which we will continue to indulge ourselves in, that reservation is a defeasance of his covenant. We must cast away all our transgressions, and not except any house of Rimmon. 2. Though we are encouraged to pray for the remission of the sins we have committed, yet if we ask for a dispensation to go on in any sin for the future, we mock God, and deceive ourselves. 3. Those that know not how to quit a place at court, when they cannot keep it without sinning against God, and wronging their consciences, do not rightly value the divine favour. 4. Those that truly hate evil, will make conscience of abstaining from all appearances of evil. The prophet, though he cannot approve his dissembling of his religion, yet because his promise

promise to offer no sacrifice to any god but the God of Israel only, was a great point gained with a Syrian, and by asking pardon in this matter, he shewed such a degree of conviction and ingenuity as gave hopes of improvement, the prophet took fair leave of him, and bid him, *Go in peace*, ver. 19. Young converts must be tenderly dealt with.

20. ¶ But Gehazi the servant of Elisha the man of God said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but *as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.* 21. So Gehazi followed after Naaman: and when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, *Is all well?* 22. And he said, *All is well: my master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim, two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.* 23. And Naaman said, *Be content, take two talents.* And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants, and they bare them before him. 24. And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed. 25. But he went in, and stood before his master: and Elisha said unto him, *Whence comest thou, Gehazi?* And he said, *Thy servant went no whither.* 26. And he said unto him, *Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive-yards, and vine-yards, and sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and maid-servants?* 27. The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

Naaman a Syrian, a courtier, a foldier, had many servants, and we read how wise and good they were, ver. 15. Elisha, a holy prophet, a man of God, has but one servant, and he proves a base, lying, naughty fellow. They that heard of Elisha at a distance, honoured him, and got good by what they heard, but he that stood continually before him, to hear his wisdom, had no good impressions made upon him either by his doctrine or miracles. One would expect that Elisha's servant should be a saint, even Ahab's servant Obadiah was, but even Christ himself has a Judas among his followers. The means of grace cannot give grace. The best men, the best ministers, have often had those about them, that have been their grief and shame. The nearer the church, the farther from God. *Many come from the east and west, to sit down with Abraham, when the children of the kingdom shall be cast out.*

Here is, (1.) Gehazi's sin. It was a complicated sin.

1. The love of money, that root of all evil, was at the bottom of it. His master condemned Naaman's treasures, but he coveted them, ver. 20. His heart, (saith Bishop Hall) was packed up in Naaman's chests, and he must run after him to fetch it. Multitudes, by coveting worldly wealth, have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

2. He blamed his master for refusing Naaman's present, condemned him as foolish, in not taking gold when he might have it, envied and grudged his soul. In short he thinks himself wiser than his master.

3. When Naaman, like a gentleman, lighted from his chariot to meet him, ver. 21. he told him a deliberate lie, that his master sent him to him, and so received that courtesy to himself, which Naaman intended for his master.

4. He abused his master, and basely misrepresented him to Naaman, as one that had soon repented of his generosity, that was fickle, and did not know his own mind, that would say and unsay, swear and unswear, that would not do an honourable thing, but he must presently undo it again. His story of the two sons of the prophets was as silly as it was false; if he would have begged a token for two young scholars, sure less than a talent of silver might serve them.

5. There was danger of his alienating Naaman from that holy religion which he had espoused, and lessening his good opinion of it: He would be ready to say as Paul's enemies suggested concerning him, 2 Cor. xii. 16, 17. that though Elisha himself did not burden him, yet being crafty, he caught him with guile, sending those that made a gain of him. We hope he understood afterwards that Elisha's hand was not in it, and that Gehazi was forced to restore what he had unjustly got, else it might have driven him to his idols again.

6. His seeking to conceal what he had unjustly got, added much to his sin. (1.) He hid it, as Achan did his gain by sacrilege, in the tower, a secret place, a strong place, till he had an opportunity of laying it out, ver. 24. Now he thought himself sure of it, and applauded his own management of a fraud, by which he had imposed not only upon the prudence of Naaman, but upon Elisha's spirit of discerning, as Ananias and Sapphira upon the apostles. (2.) He denied it: he went in and stood before his master, ready to receive his orders; none looked more observant of his master, though really none more abusive to him; he thought as Ephraim, *I am become rich, but they shall find no iniquity in me*, Hos. xii. 8. His master asked him, where he had been? no where, Sir, (saith he) out of the house. Note, One lie commonly begets another: The way of that sin is down hill, therefore dare to be true.

(2.) The punishment of this sin. Elisha presently called him to an account for it; and observe,

1. How he was convicted. He thought to impose upon the prophets, but was soon given to understand that the Spirit of prophecy could not be deceived, and that it was in vain to lie to the Holy Ghost. Elisha could tell him, 1. What he had done, though he had denied it. Thou sayest thou wentest no whither, but went not my heart with thee? ver. 26. Was Gehazi yet to learn that prophets had spiritual eyes; or could he think to hide any thing from a seer, from him with whom the secret of the Lord was? Note It is folly to presume upon sin in hopes of secrecy. When thou goest aside into any by-path, doth not thy own conscience go with thee; doth not the

eye of God go with thee? *He that covers his sin shall not prosper*; particularly, *a lying tongue is but for a moment*, Prov. xii. 19. Truth will out, and often comes to light strangely, to the confusion of those that makes lies their refuge. 2. What he designed, though he kept that in his own breast. He could tell him the very thoughts and intents of his heart, that he was projecting now he had got those two talents, to purchase ground and cattle, to leave Elisha's service, and to set up for himself. Note, all the foolish hopes and contrivances of carnal worldlings, are open before God. And he tells him also the evil of it, *Is it a time to receive money?* Is this an opportunity of enriching thyself? Couldst thou find no better a way of getting money, than by belying thy master, and laying a stumbling block before a young convert? Note, Those that are for getting wealth at any time, and by any ways and means whatsoever, right or wrong, lay themselves open to a great deal of temptation. They that will be rich, (*per juss, per nefas; rem, rem, quocunque modo rem*) drown themselves in destruction and perdition, 1 Tim. vi. 19. War, and fire, and plague, and shipwreck, are not, as many make them, times to get money by. It is not a time to increase our wealth, when we cannot do it but in such ways as are dishonourable to God and religion, or injurious to our brethren and the public.

2. How he was punished for it. *The leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to thee*, ver. 27. If he will have his money he shall have his disease with it, *transit cum onere*. He was contriving to entail lands upon his posterity; but instead of them entails a loathsome disease on the heirs of his body, from generation to generation. The sentence was immediately executed on himself; no sooner said than done, he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow. Thus he is stigmatized and made infamous, and carries the mark of his shame wherever he goes: Thus he load himself and family with a curse, which shall not only for the present proclaim his villainy, but for ever perpetuate the remembrance of it. Note, *The getting of treasures by a lying tongue, is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death*, Prov. xxi. 6. Those who get wealth by fraud and injustice, cannot expect either the comfort or the continuance of it. What was Gehazi profited, though he gained his two talents, when thereby he lost his health, his honour, his peace, his service, and, if repentance prevented not, his soul for ever? See Job xx. 12, &c.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A farther account of the wondrous works of Elisha. 1. His making iron to swim, ver. 1—7. 2. His disclosing to the king of Israel the secret counsels of the king of Syria, ver. 8—12. 3. His saving himself out of the hands of those who were sent to apprehend him, ver. 13—23. (2.) The besieging of Samaria by the Syrians, and the great distress the city was reduced to, ver. 24—33. The relief of it is another of the wonders wrought by Elisha's word, which we shall have the story of in the next chapter, Elisha is still a great blessing both to church and state, both to the sons of the prophets, and to his prince.

1. **A**ND the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us. 2. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye. 3. And one said, Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go. 4. So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood. 5. But as one was felling a beam, the axe-head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed. 6. And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither, and the iron did swim. 7. Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it.

Several things may be observed here,

1. Concerning the sons of the prophets, and their condition and character. The college here spoken of seems to be that at Gilgal, for there Elisha was, chap. iv. 38. and it was near Jordan; and probably wherever Elisha resided, as many as could of the sons of the prophets flocked to him for the advantage of his instructions, counsels, and prayers. Every one would covet to dwell with him, and be near him. Those that would be teachers should lay out themselves to get the best advantages for learning. Now, observe,

1. Their number increased, so that they wanted room. *The place is too strait for us*, ver. 1. A good hearing, for it is a sign many are added to them. Elisha's miracles, doubtless, drew in many; perhaps they increased the more now Gehazi was cashiered, and it is likely, an honest man put in his room, to take care of their provisions, for it should seem by that instance, chap. iv. 23. that Naaman's case was not the only one in which he grudged his master's generosity.

2. They were humble men, and did not affect that which was gay or great. When they wanted room, they did not speak of sending for cedars, the marble stones, and curious artificers, but only of getting every man a beam, to run up some sorry hut or cottage with. It becomes the sons of the prophets, who profess to look for great things in the other world, to be content with mean things in this.

3. They were poor men, and men that had no interest in great ones. It was a sign Joram was king, and Jezebel ruled too, else the sons of the prophets, when they wanted room, needed only to apply themselves to the government, not to have consulted among themselves about the enlargement of their buildings. God's prophets have seldom been the world's favourites. Nay, so poor were they, that they had not wherewithal to hire workmen, but must borrow of their neighbours. Poverty then is no bar to prophecy.

4. They were industrious men, and willing to take pains, desired not to live like idle drones, (idle monks I might have said) upon the labours of others, but only desired leave of their president to work for themselves. As the sons of the prophets must not be so taken up with contemplation, as to render themselves unfit for action; so much less must they indulge themselves in their ease, as to be averse to labour. He that must eat or die, must work or starve, 2 Thess. iii. 8—10. Let no man think an honest employment either a burden or a disparagement.

5. They were men that had a great value and veneration for Elisha; though

though they were themselves prophets, they paid a mighty deference to him: 1. They would not go about to build at all without his leave, *ver. 2.* It is good for us all to be suspicious of our own judgment, even when we think we have most reason for it, and to be desirous of the advice of those who are wiser and more experienced; and it is especially commendable in the sons of the prophets, to take their fathers along with them, and to act in all things of moment under their conduct, *permissu superiorum.* 2. They would not willingly go fell timber without his company: *Go with thy servants,* *ver. 3.* not only to advise us in any exigence, but to keep good order among us, that being under thine eye we may carry ourselves as becomes us. Good disciples desire to be always under good discipline.

6. They were honest men, and men that were in care to give all men their own. When one of them accidentally fetching too fierce a stroke, (as those that work seldom, are apt to be violent) threw off his axe-head into the water, he did not say, it was a mischance, and who can help it; It was the fault of the helve, and the owner deserves to stand to the loss, but cries out with a mighty concern, *Alas, master, for it was borrowed,* *ver. 5.* Had the axe been his own, it would only have troubled him, that he could not be farther serviceable to his brethren; but now, besides that, it troubles him that he cannot be just to the owner, to whom he ought to be not only just but grateful. Note, we ought to be as careful of that which is borrowed, as of that which is our own, that it receive no damage, because we must love our neighbour as ourselves, and do as we would be done by. It is likely, this prophet was poor, and had not wherewithal to pay for the axe, which made the loss of it so much the greater trouble. To those that bear an honest mind, the forest grievance of poverty is not so much their own want and disgrace, as their being by it rendered unable to pay their just debts.

2. Concerning the father of the prophets, Elisha.

(1.) That he was a man of great condescension and compassion; He went with the sons of the prophets to the woods, when they desired his company, *ver. 3.* Let no man, especially no minister, think himself too great to stoop to do good, but be tender to all.

(2.) That he was a man of great power, he could make iron to swim, contrary to its nature, *ver. 6.* for the God of nature is not tied up to its laws. He did not throw the helve after the hatchet, but cut down a new stick, and cast it into the river; we need not double the miracle, by supposing, that the stick sunk to fetch up the iron, it was enough, that it was a sign of the divine summons to the iron to rise. God's grace can thus raise the stony iron heart, which is sunk into the mud of this world, and raise up affections naturally earthly to things above.

8. ¶ Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place *shall be* my camp. 9. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place: for thither the Syrians are come down. 10. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him, and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. 11. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing, and he called his servants and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us *is* for the king of Israel? 12. And one of his servants said, None my lord, O, king: but Elisha the prophet, that *is* in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber.

Here we have Elisha, with his spirit in prophecy, serving the king, as before helping the sons of the prophets; for that, as other gifts, is given to every man to profit withal; and whatever abilities any man has of doing good, he is by them made a debtor both to the wife and unwife. Observe here,

1. How the king of Israel was informed by Elisha of all the designs and motions of his enemy, the king of Syria, more effectually than he could have been by the most faithful and vigilant spies. If the king of Syria in a secret council of war determined in what place to make an inroad upon the coasts of Israel, where he thought it would be the greatest surprise, and they would be least able to make resistance, before his forces could receive his orders, the king of Israel had notice of them from Elisha, and so had an opportunity of preventing the mischief; and this many a time, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* See here, (1.) That the enemies of God's Israel are politic in their devices, and restless in their attempts against him. *They shall not know, nor see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them,* *Neh. iv. 11.* (2.) All those devices are known to God, even those that are deepest laid. He knows not only what men do, but what they design, and has many ways of countermining them. (3.) It is a great advantage to us to be warned of our danger that we may stand upon our guard against it. The work of God's prophets is to give us warning; if being warned, we do not save ourselves, it is our own fault, and our blood will be upon our own head. The king of Israel would regard the warnings Elisha gave him of his danger by the Syrians, but not the warnings he gave him of his danger by his sins: Those are little heeded by the most, that will save themselves from death, but not from hell.

2. How the king of Syria repented this. He suspected treachery among his senators, and that his counsels were betrayed, *ver. 11.* But one of his servants, that had heard by Naaman and others of Elisha's wondrous works, concludes it must needs be he that gave this intelligence to the king of Israel, *ver. 12.* What could not he discover, who could tell Gehazi his thought? Here a confession of the boundless knowledge, as before of the boundless power of Israel's God, is extorted from Syria. Nothing done, said, thought by any person, in any place, at any time, is out of the reach of God's cognizance.

13. ¶ And he said, Go, and spy where he *is*, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, *he is* in Dothan. 14. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. 15. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city, both with horses and chariots: and his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? 16. And he answered, Fear not: for they that *be* with us, *are* more than they

that *be* with them. 17. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw: and behold, the mountain was full of horses, and chariots of fire round about Elisha. 18. And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness, according to the word of Elisha. 19. ¶ And Elisha said unto them, This *is* not the way, neither *is* this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria. 20. And it came to pass when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these *men* that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw, and behold, *they were* in the midst of Samaria. 21. And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite *them*? shall I smite *them*? 22. And he answered, Thou shalt not smite *them*: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword, and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master. 23. And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drank, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

Here is, 1. The mighty force which the king of Syria sent to seize Elisha. He found out where he was, at Dothan, *ver. 13.* which was not far from Samaria, thither he sent a great host, which were to come upon him by night, and to bring him dead or alive, *ver. 14.* Perhaps he had heard, that when only one captain and his fifty men were sent to take Elisha, they were baffled in the attempt, and therefore he sent an army against Elisha, as if the fire from heaven that consumed fifty men, could not as easily consume fifty thousand. Naaman could tell him that Elisha dwelt not in any stronghold, nor was attended with any guards, nor had any such great interest in the people, that he needed fear a tumult among them; what occasion then was there for this great force? But thus he hoped to make him sure, especially coming upon him by surprise. Foolish man! Did he believe that Elisha had informed the king of Israel of his secret counsels or not? If not, what quarrel had he with him? If he did, could he be so weak as to imagine that he would not discover the designs laid against him; and that having interest enough in heaven to discover them, he would not have interest enough to defeat them? Those that fight against God, his people and prophets, know not what they do.

2. The grievous fright which the prophet's servant was in, when he perceived the city surrounded by the Syrians, and the effectual course which the prophet took to pacify him, and free him from his fears. It seems, Elisha used his servant to rise early, that is the way to bring something to pass, and to do the work of a day in its day. Being up, we may suppose he heard the noise of soldiers, and thereupon looked out, and was aware of an army compassing the city, *ver. 15.* with great assurance, no doubt, of success; and that they should have this troublesome prophet in their hands presently. Now observe, (1.) What a consternation he was in; he runs straight to Elisha, to bring him an account of it, *Alas master,* (saith he) *what shall we do?* we are undone: it is to no purpose to think either of fighting or flying, but we must unavoidably fall into their hands. Had he but studied David's psalms, which were then extant, he might have learnt *not to be afraid of ten thousands of people,* *Psal. iii. 6.* *no not of an host encamped against him,* *Psal. xxvii. 3.* Had he considered that he was embarked with his master, by whom God had done great things, and whom he would not now leave to *fall into the hands of the uncircumcised,* and who having saved others, himself, no doubt, would save, he had not been thus at a loss. If he had only said, *What shall I do?* it had been the more excusable, and like that of the disciples, *Lord, save us, we perish;* but he needed not to put his master in distress, nor to say, *what shall we do?* (2.) How his master quieted him. 1. By word: what he said to him, *ver. 16.* is spoken to all the faithful servants of God, when *without are fightings, and within are fears,* *Fear not,* with that fear which has torment and amazement, *for they that be with us, to protect us, are more than they that be against us,* to destroy us; angels, unspeakably more numerous; God, infinitely more powerful: When we are magnifying the causes of our fear, we ought to possess ourselves with clear, and great, and high thoughts of God, and the invisible world. *If God be for us, we know what follows,* *Rom. viii. 31.* 2. By vision, *ver. 17.* (1.) It seems, Elisha was much concerned for the satisfaction of his servant. Good men desire, not only to be easy themselves, but to have those about them easy; Elisha had lately parted with his old man, and this was newly come into his service, and therefore not having the advantage of experience, his master was desirous to give him other convincing evidence of that omnipotence which employed him, and was therefore employed for him. Note, They whose faith is strong, ought tenderly to consider and compassionate those who are weak and of a timorous spirit, and to do what they can to strengthen their hands. (2.) He saw himself safe, and wished no more, but that his servant might see what he saw, a guard of angels round about him, such as were his master's convoy to the gates of heaven, were his protectors against the gates of hell. *Chariots of fire, and horses of fire;* fire, is both dreadful and devouring; that power, which was engaged for Elisha's protection, could both terrify and consume the assailants; as angels are God's messengers, so they are his soldiers, his hosts, *Gen. xxxii. 2.* his legions or regiments, *Matth. xxvi. 53.* for the good of his people. (3.) For the satisfaction of his servant, there needed no more than the opening of his eyes, that therefore he prayed for, and obtained for him, *Lord, open his eyes that he may see;* the eyes of his body were open, and with them he saw the danger, Lord, open the eyes of his faith, that with them he may see the protection we are under. Note, 1. The greatest kindness we can do for those that are fearful and faint-hearted, is to pray for them, and so to recommend them to the mighty grace of God. 2. The opening of our eyes will be the silencing of our fears, in the dark we are most apt to be frightened; the clearer sight we have of the sovereignty and power of heaven, the less we shall fear the calamities of this earth.

3. The shameful defeat which Elisha gave to the host of Syrians which came to seize him; they thought to make a prey of him, but he made tools

of them, perfectly played with them, so far was he from fearing them, or any damage by them.

(1.) He prayed to God to smite them with blindness, and they were all struck blind immediately, not stark blind, nor so as to be themselves aware that they were blind, for they could see the light, but their sight was so altered, that they could not know the persons and places they were before acquainted with, *ver. 18.* they were so confounded, that those among them, whom they depended upon for information, did not know this place to be Dothan, nor this person to be Elisha, but *grope at noon-day, as in the night*, *Isa. lix. 10.* Job xii. 24, 25. their memory failed them, and their distinguishing faculty; see the power of God over the minds and understandings of men both ways, he enlightened the eyes of Elisha's friend, and darkened the eyes of his foes, that they might see indeed but not perceive, *Isa. vi. 9.* For this twofold judgment Christ came into this world, *that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind*, John ix. 39. a favour of life to some, of death to others.

(2.) When they were thus bewildered and confounded, he led them to Samaria, *ver. 19.* promising that he would shew them the man whom they fought, and did so; he did not lie to them, when he told them, *this is not the way, nor is this the city* where Elisha is, for he was now come out of the city; and if they would see him, they must go to another city which he would direct them to; they that fight against God and his prophets, deceive themselves, and are justly given up to delusions.

(3.) When he had brought them to Samaria, he prayed to God to open their eyes, and restore them their memories, that they might see where they were, *ver. 20.* and behold, to their great terror, *they were in the midst of Samaria*, where, it is probable, there was a standing force sufficient to cut them all off, or make them prisoners of war. Satan, the god of this world, blinds mens eyes, and so deludes them into their own ruin, but when God enlightens their eyes, they then see themselves in the midst of their enemies, captives to Satan, and in danger of hell, though before they thought their condition good. The enemies of God and his church, when they fancy themselves ready to triumph, will find themselves conquered and triumphed over.

(4.) When he had them at his mercy, he made it appear, that he was acted by a divine goodness as well as a divine power.

1. He took care to protect them from the danger into which he had brought them, and was content to shew them what he could have done; he needed not the sword of an angel to revenge his cause, the sword of the king of Israel is at his service if he pleaseth, *ver. 21.* *My father*, (so respectfully doth he now speak to him, though soon after he swore his death) *shall I smite them?* and again, as if his fingers itched to be at them, *shall I smite them?* Perhaps, he remembered how God was displeased at his father, for *leaving go out of his hands* those whom he had put it into his power to destroy, and he would not offend in like manner, yet such a reverence has he for the prophet, that he will not strike a stroke without his commission; but the prophet would by no means suffer him to meddle with them, they were brought hither to be convinced and shamed, not to be killed, *ver. 22.* Had they been his prisoners, taken captive by his sword and bow, when they had asked quarter, it had been barbarous to deny, and when he had given it them, it had been perfidious to do them any hurt, and against the law of arms to kill men in cool blood; but they were not his prisoners, they were God's prisoners and the prophet's, and therefore he must do them no harm; they that humble themselves under God's hand, take the best course to secure themselves.

2. He took care to provide for them, ordered the king to treat them handsomely, and then dismisses them fairly, which he did, *ver. 23.* (1.) It was the king's praise that he was so obsequious to the prophet, contrary to his inclination, and, as it seemed, to his interest, 1 Sam. xxiv. 19. nay, so willing was he to oblige Elisha, that whereas he was ordered only to set bread and water before them, (and that is good fare for captives) he prepared great provision for them, for the credit of his court and country, and of Elisha. (2.) It was the prophet's praise, that he was so generous to his enemies, who, though they came to take him, could not but go away taken with him, as both the mightiest and the kindest man they ever met with; the great duty of loving enemies, and doing good to those that hate us, was both commanded in the Old Testament, *Prov. xxv. 21, 22.* *If thine enemy hunger, feed him*, *Exod. xxiii. 4, 5.* and practised, as here by Elisha; his predecessor had given a specimen of divine justice, when he called for flames of fire on the heads of his persecutors to consume them, but he gave a specimen of divine mercy, in heaping coals of fire on the heads of his persecutors to melt them; let us not then be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Lastly, The good effect this had for the present upon the Syrians, they came no more into the land of Israel, *ver. 23. viz.* upon this errand, to take Elisha, they saw it was to no purpose to attempt that, nor would any of their bands be persuaded to make an assault on so great and good a man; the most glorious victory over an enemy is to turn him into a friend.

24. ¶ And it came to pass after this, that Ben-hadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria. 25. And there was a great famine in Samaria: and behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of doves dung for five pieces of silver. 26. And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king. 27. And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn-floor, or out of the wine-press? 28. And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow. 29. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son. 30. ¶ And it came to pass when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes, and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and behold, he had sackcloth within, upon his flesh. 31. Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day. 32. But Elisha sat in his house (and the elders sat with him) and the king sent a man from before him: but ere the messenger came to him, he said

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to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? look when the messenger cometh shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: is not the sound of his master's feet behind him? 33. And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil is of the LORD, what should I wait for the LORD any longer?

This last paragraph of this chapter should of right have been the first of the next chapter, for it begins a new story, which is there continued and concluded.

Here is, 1. The siege which the king of Syria laid to Samaria: and the great distress which the city was reduced to thereby; the Syrians had soon forgot the kindnesses they had lately received in Samaria, and very ungratefully, for aught appears, without any provocation, seek the destruction of it, *ver. 24.* These are base spirits that can never be obliged; the country we may suppose plundered and laid waste, when this capital city was brought to the last extremity, *ver. 25.* The dearth which had of late been in the land was probably the occasion of the emptiness of their stores, or the siege was so sudden that they had not time to lay in provisions, so that while the sword devoured without, the famine within was more grievous, *Lam. iv. 9.* for, it should seem, the Syrians designed not to storm the city, but to starve it; so great was the scarcity, that an ass's head, that has but little flesh on it, and that unfavoury, unwholesome, and ceremonially unclean, was sold for five pounds, and a small quantity of fitches, or lentils, or some such coarse corn, then called doves dung, no more of it than the quantity of six eggs, for five pieces of silver, about twelve or fifteen shillings. Learn to value plenty, and to be thankful for it; see how contemptible money is, when in time of famine it is so freely parted with for any thing that is eatable.

2. The sad complaint which a poor woman had to make to the king in the extremity of the famine: he was passing by upon the wall to give orders for the mounting of the guard, the posting of the archers, the repair of the breaches, and the like, when a woman of the city cried to him, *Help, my lord, O king*, *ver. 26.* Whither should the subject in distress go for help but to the prince, who is by office the protector of right and the avenger of wrong? He returns but a melancholy answer, *ver. 27.* *If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I?* Some think it was a quarrelling word, and the language of his fretfulness; why dost thou expect any thing from me, when God himself deals thus hardly with us? Because he could not help her as he would, out of the floor or the wine-press, he would not help her at all; we must take heed of being made cross by cross providences. It rather seems to be a quieting word, let us be content, and make the best of our affliction, looking up to God, for till he help us I cannot help thee. (1.) He laments the emptiness of the floor and the wine-press, those were not as they had been, even the king's failed; we read, *ver. 23.* of great provisions which he had at command, sufficient for the entertainment of an army, yet now he has not wherewithal to relieve one poor woman; scarcity sometimes follows upon great plenty, we cannot be sure that *to-morrow shall be as this day*, *Psal. xxx. 6.* (2.) He acknowledgeth himself thereby disabled to help, unless God would help them. Note, Creatures are helpless things without God, for every creature is that, all that, and only that which he makes it to be. However, though he cannot help her, he is willing to hear her, *ver. 28.* *What aileth thee?* Is there any thing singular in thy case, or dost thou fare worse than thy neighbours? Truly yes, she and one of her neighbours had made a barbarous agreement, that all provisions failing, they should boil and eat her son first, and then her neighbour's; hers was eaten, (who can think of it without horror?) and now her neighbour hid hers, *ver. 28, 29.* See an instance of the dominion which the flesh has got above the spirit, when the most natural affections of the mind may be thus overpowered by the natural appetites of the body, see the word of God fulfilled; among the threatenings of God's judgments upon Israel for their sins this was one, *Deut. xxviii. 53-57.* that they should eat the flesh of their own children, which one would think incredible, yet it came to pass.

3. The king's indignation against Elisha upon this occasion; he lamented the calamity, *rent his clothes, and had sackcloth upon his flesh*, *ver. 30.* as one heartily concerned for the misery of his people, and that it was not in his power to help them; but he laments not his own iniquity, nor the iniquity of his people, which was the procuring cause of the calamity; is not sensible that his *ways and his doings have procured this to himself; this is his wickedness, for it is bitter; the foolishness of man perverts his way, and then his heart frets against the Lord*; instead of vowing to pull down the calves at Dan and Beth-el, or letting the law have its course against the prophets of Baal, and of the groves, he swears the death of Elisha, *ver. 31.* What, what is the matter? what has Elisha done? his head is the most innocent and valuable in all Israel, and yet that must be devoted and made an anathema. Thus in the days of the persecuting emperors, when the empire groaned under any extraordinary calamity, the fault was laid on the Christians, and they were doomed to destruction, *Christianos ad leones*; perhaps Jehoram was in this heat against Elisha, because he had foretold this judgment, or had persuaded him to hold out, and not surrender, or rather because he did not by his prayers raise the siege, and relieve the city, which he thought he could do, but would not; whereas till they repented and reformed, and were ready for deliverance, they had no reason to expect that the prophet should pray for it.

4. The foresight Elisha had of the king's design against him, *ver. 32.* he sat in his house well composed, and the elders with him well employed, no doubt, while the king was like a wild bull in a net, or like the troubled sea when it cannot rest; he told the elders there was an officer coming from the king to cut off his head, and bid them stop him at the door, and not let him in, for the king his master was just following him, to revoke the order as we may suppose; the same spirit of prophecy that enabled Elisha to tell what was done at a distance, authorized him to call the king *the son of a murderer*, which unless we could produce such an extraordinary commission, it is not for us to imitate; far be it from us to despise dominion, and to speak evil of dignities. He appeals to the elders whether he had deserved to fall at the king's hands, see whether in this he be not the son of a murderer? For *what evil had Elisha done?* He had not desired the woful day, *Jer. xvii. 16.*

5. The king's passionate speech, when he came to prevent the execution of his edict for the beheading of Elisha; he seems to have been in a struggle between his convictions and his corruptions, knew not what to say, but seeing things brought to the last extremity, he even abandons himself to despair, *ver. 33.* *This evil is of the Lord*, wherein his notions were right, and well applied; it is a general truth that all penal evil is of the Lord, as the first cause, and sovereign judge, *Amos iii. 6.* and this we ought to apply to particular cases, if all evil, then this evil, whatever it is we are now groaning under, whoever are the instruments, God is the principal agent; but his inference from this truth was foolish and wicked, *What should I wait*

though they were themselves prophets, they paid a mighty deference to him: 1. They would not go about to build at all without his leave, *ver. 2.* It is good for us all to be suspicious of our own judgment, even when we think we have most reason for it, and to be desirous of the advice of those who are wiser and more experienced; and it is especially commendable in the sons of the prophets, to take their fathers along with them, and to act in all things of moment under their conduct, *permissu superiorum.* 2. They would not willingly go fell timber without his company: *Go with thy servants,* *ver. 3.* not only to advise us in any exigence, but to keep good order among us, that being under thine eye we may carry ourselves as becomes us. Good disciples desire to be always under good discipline.

6. They were honest men, and men that were in care to give all men their own. When one of them accidentally fetching too fierce a stroke, (as those that work seldom, are apt to be violent) threw off his axe-head into the water, he did not say, it was a mischance, and who can help it; It was the fault of the helve, and the owner deserves to stand to the loss, but cries out with a mighty concern, *Alas, master, for it was borrowed,* *ver. 5.* Had the axe been his own, it would only have troubled him, that he could not be farther serviceable to his brethren; but now, besides that, it troubles him that he cannot be just to the owner, to whom he ought to be not only just but grateful. Note, we ought to be as careful of that which is borrowed, as of that which is our own, that it receive no damage, because we must love our neighbour as ourselves, and do as we would be done by. It is likely, this prophet was poor, and had not wherewithal to pay for the axe, which made the loss of it so much the greater trouble. To those that bear an honest mind, the forest grievance of poverty is not so much their own want and disgrace, as their being by it rendered unable to pay their just debts.

2. Concerning the father of the prophets, Elisha.

(1.) That he was a man of great condescension and compassion; He went with the sons of the prophets to the woods, when they desired his company, *ver. 3.* Let no man, especially so minister, think himself too great to stoop to do good, but be tender to all.

(2.) That he was a man of great power, he could make iron to swim, contrary to its nature, *ver. 6.* for the God of nature is not tied up to its laws. He did not throw the helve after the hatchet, but cut down a new stick, and cast it into the river; we need not double the miracle, by supposing, that the stick sunk to fetch up the iron, it was enough, that it was a signal of the divine summons to the iron to rise. God's grace can thus raise the stony iron heart, which is sunk into the mud of this world, and raise up affections naturally earthly to things above.

8. ¶ Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place *shall be* my camp. 9. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place: for thither the Syrians are come down. 10. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him, and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. 11. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing, and he called his servants and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us *is* for the king of Israel? 12. And one of his servants said, None my lord, O, king: but Elisha the prophet, that *is* in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bed-chamber.

Here we have Elisha, with his spirit in prophecy, serving the king, as before helping the sons of the prophets; for that, as other gifts, is given to every man to profit withal; and whatever abilities any man has of doing good, he is by them made a debtor both to the wise and unwise. Observe here,

1. How the king of Israel was informed by Elisha of all the designs and motions of his enemy, the king of Syria, more effectually than he could have been by the most faithful and vigilant spies. If the king of Syria in a secret council of war determined in what place to make an inroad upon the coasts of Israel, where he thought it would be the greatest surprise, and they would be least able to make resistance, before his forces could receive his orders, the king of Israel had notice of them from Elisha, and so had an opportunity of preventing the mischief; and this many a time, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* See here, (1.) That the enemies of God's Israel are politic in their devices, and restless in their attempts against him. *They shall not know, nor see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them,* *Neh. iv. 11.* (2.) All those devices are known to God, even those that are deepest laid. He knows not only what men do, but what they design, and has many ways of counterming them. (3.) It is a great advantage to us to be warned of our danger that we may stand upon our guard against it. The work of God's prophets is to give us warning; if being warned, we do not save ourselves, it is our own fault, and our blood will be upon our own head. The king of Israel would regard the warnings Elisha gave him of his danger by the Syrians, but not the warnings he gave him of his danger by his sins: Those are little heeded by the most, that will save themselves from death, but not from hell.

2. How the king of Syria repented this. He suspected treachery among his senators, and that his counsels were betrayed, *ver. 11.* But one of his servants, that had heard by Naaman and others of Elisha's wondrous works, concludes it must needs be he that gave this intelligence to the king of Israel, *ver. 12.* What could not he discover, who could tell Gehazi his thought? Here a confession of the boundless knowledge, as before of the boundless power of Israel's God, is extorted from Syria's king. Nothing done, said, thought by any person, in any place, at any time, is out of the reach of God's cognizance.

13. ¶ And he said, Go, and spy where he *is*, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, *he is* in Dothan. 14. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. 15. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city, both with horses and chariots: and his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? 16. And he answered, Fear not: for they that *be* with us, *are* more than they

that *be* with them. 17. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw: and behold, the mountain *was* full of horses, and chariots of fire round about Elisha. 18. And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness, according to the word of Elisha. 19. ¶ And Elisha said unto them, This *is* not the way, neither *is* this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria. 20. And it came to pass when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these *men* that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw, and behold, *they were* in the midst of Samaria. 21. And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite *them*? shall I smite *them*? 22. And he answered, Thou shalt not smite *them*: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword, and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master. 23. And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drank, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

Here is, 1. The mighty force which the king of Syria sent to seize Elisha. He found out where he was, at Dothan, *ver. 13.* which was not far from Samaria, thither he sent a great host, which were to come upon him by night, and to bring him dead or alive, *ver. 14.* Perhaps he had heard, that when only one captain and his fifty men were sent to take Elisha, they were baffled in the attempt, and therefore he sent an army against Elisha, as if the fire from heaven that consumed fifty men, could not as easily consume fifty thousand. Naaman could tell him that Elisha dwelt not in any stronghold, nor was attended with any guards, nor had any such great interest in the people, that he needed fear a tumult among them; what occasion then was there for this great force? But thus he hoped to make him sure, especially coming upon him by surprise. Foolish man! Did he believe that Elisha had informed the king of Israel of his secret counsels or not? If not, what quarrel had he with him? If he did, could he be so weak as to imagine that he would not discover the designs laid against him; and that having interest enough in heaven to discover them, he would not have interest enough to defeat them? Those that fight against God, his people and prophets, know not what they do.

2. The grievous fright which the prophet's servant was in, when he perceived the city surrounded by the Syrians, and the effectual course which the prophet took to pacify him, and free him from his fears. It seems, Elisha used his servant to rise early, that is the way to bring something to pass, and to do the work of a day in its day. Being up, we may suppose he heard the noise of soldiers, and thereupon looked out, and was aware of an army compassing the city, *ver. 15.* with great assurance, no doubt, of success; and that they should have this troublesome prophet in their hands presently. Now observe, (1.) What a consternation he was in; he runs straight to Elisha, to bring him an account of it, *Alas master,* (saith he) *what shall we do?* we are undone: it is to no purpose to think either of fighting or flying, but we must unavoidably fall into their hands. Had he but studied David's psalms, which were then extant, he might have learnt *not to be afraid of ten thousands of people,* *Psalm. iii. 6.* no not of *an host encamped against him,* *Psalm. xxvii. 3.* Had he considered that he was embarked with his master, by whom God had done great things, and whom he would not now leave to *fall into the hands of the uncircumcised,* and who having saved others, himself, no doubt, would save, he had not been thus at a loss. If he had only said, *What shall I do?* it had been the more excusable, and like that of the disciples, *Lord, save us, we perish;* but he needed not to put his master in distress, nor to say, *what shall we do?* (2.) How his master quieted him. 1. By word: what he said to him, *ver. 16.* is spoken to all the faithful servants of God, when *without are fightings, and within are fears.* Fear not, with that fear which has torment and amazement, *for they that be with us, to protect us, are more than they that be against us, to destroy us;* angels, unspeakably more numerous; God, infinitely more powerful: When we are magnifying the causes of our fear, we ought to possess ourselves with clear, and great, and high thoughts of God, and the invisible world. *If God be for us, we know what follows,* *Rom. viii. 31.* 2. By vision, *ver. 17.* (1.) It seems, Elisha was much concerned for the satisfaction of his servant. Good men desire, not only to be easy themselves, but to have those about them easy; Elisha had lately parted with his old man, and this was newly come into his service, and therefore not having the advantage of experience, his master was desirous to give him other convincing evidence of that omnipotence which employed him, and was therefore employed for him. Note, They whose faith is strong, ought tenderly to consider and compassionate those who are weak and of a timorous spirit, and to do what they can to strengthen their hands. (2.) He saw himself safe, and wished no more, but that his servant might see what he saw, a guard of angels round about him, such as were his master's convoy to the gates of heaven, were his protectors against the gates of hell. *Chariots of fire, and horses of fire;* fire is both dreadful and devouring; that power, which was engaged for Elisha's protection, could both terrify and consume the assailants; as angels are God's messengers, so they are his soldiers, his hosts, *Gen. xxxii. 2.* his legions or regiments, *Matt. xxvi. 53.* for the good of his people. (3.) For the satisfaction of his servant, there need d no more than the opening of his eyes, that therefore he prayed for, and obtained for him, *Lord, open his eyes that he may see;* the eyes of his body were open, and with them he saw the danger, *Lord, open the eyes of his faith, that with them he may see the protection we are under.* Note, 1. The greatest kindness we can do for those that are fearful and faint-hearted, is to pray for them, and so to recommend them to the mighty grace of God. 2. The opening of our eyes will be the silencing of our fears, in the dark we are most apt to be frightened; the clearer light we have of the sovereignty and power of heaven, the less we shall fear the calamities of this earth.

3. The shameful defeat which Elisha gave to the host of Syrians which came to seize him; they thought to make a prey of him, but he made tools

of them, perfectly played with them, so far was he from fearing them, or any damage by them.

(1.) He prayed to God to smite them with blindness, and they were all struck blind immediately, not stark blind, nor so as to be themselves aware that they were blind, for they could see the light, but their sight was so altered, that they could not know the persons and places they were before acquainted with, *ver. 18.* they were so confounded, that those among them, whom they depended upon for information, did not know this place to be Dothan, nor this person to be Elisha, but *groined at noon-day, as in the night, 11a. lix. 10.* Job xii. 24, 25, their memory failed them, and their distinguishing faculty; see the power of God over the minds and understandings of men both ways, he enlightened the eyes of Elisha's friend, and darkened the eyes of his foes, that they might see indeed but not perceive, *Ista. vi. 9.* For this twofold judgment Christ came into this world, *that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind,* John ix. 39. a favour of life to some, of death to others.

(2.) When they were thus bewildered and confounded, he led them to Samaria, *ver. 19.* promising that he would shew them the man whom they sought, and did so; he did not lie to them, when he told them, *this is not the way, nor is this the city* where Elisha is, for he was now come out of the city; and if they would see him, they must go to another city which he would direct them to; they that fight against God and his prophets, deceive themselves, and are justly given up to delusions.

(3.) When he had brought them to Samaria, he prayed to God so to open their eyes, and restore them their memories, that they might see where they were, *ver. 20.* and behold, to their great terror, *they saw in the night of Samaria,* where, it is probable, there was a standing force sufficient to cut them all off, or make them prisoners of war. Satan, the god of this world, blinds mens eyes, and so deludes them into their own ruin, but when God enlightens their eyes, they then see themselves in the midst of their enemies, captives to Satan, and in danger of hell, though before they thought their condition good. The enemies of God and his church, when they fancy themselves ready to triumph, will find themselves conquered and triumphed over.

(4.) When he had them at his mercy, he made it appear, that he was acted by a divine goodness as well as a divine power.

1. He took care to protect them from the danger into which he had brought them, and was content to shew them what he could have done: he needed not the sword of an angel to revenge his cause, the sword of the king of Israel is at his service if he please, *ver. 21.* *My fathers (so respectfully doth he now speak to him, though soon after he swore his death) shall I spare them?* and again, as if his fingers itched to be at them, *shall I spare them?* Perhaps, he remembered how God was displeased at his father, for *having* *gone out of his hands* those whom he had put it into his power to destroy, and he would not offend in like manner, yet such a reverence has he for the prophet, that he will not strike a stroke without his commission; but the prophet would by no means suffer him to meddle with them, they were brought hither to be convinced and shamed, not to be killed, *ver. 22.* Had they been his prisoners, taken captive by his sword and bow, when they had asked quarter, it had been barbarous to deny, and when he had given it them, it had been perfidious to do them any hurt, and against the law of arms to kill men in cool blood; but they were not his prisoners, they were God's prisoners, and the prophet's, and therefore he must do them no harm; they that humble themselves under God's hand, take the best course to secure themselves.

2. He took care to provide for them, ordered the king to treat them handsomely, and then dismisses them fairly, which he did, *ver. 23.* (1.) It was the king's praise that he was so obsequious to the prophet, contrary to his inclination, and, as it seemed, to his interest, *1 Sam. xxix. 19.* nay, so willing was he to oblige Elisha, that whereas he was ordered only to set *bread and water* before them, (and that is good fare for captives) he *prepared great provision* for them, for the credit of his court and country, and of Elisha. (2.) It was the prophet's praise, that he was so generous to his enemies, who, though they came to take him, could not but go away taken with him, as both the mightiest and the kindest man they ever met with; the great duty of loving enemies, and doing good to those that hate us, was both commanded in the Old Testament, *Prov. xxv. 21, 22.* *If thine enemy hunger, feed him,* *Exod. xxiii. 4, 5.* and practised, as here by Elisha; his predecessor had given a specimen of divine justice, when he called for flames of fire on the heads of his persecutors to consume them, but he gave a specimen of divine mercy, in heaping coals of fire on the heads of his persecutors to melt them; let us not then be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Lastly, The good effect this had for the present upon the Syrians, they *came no more into the land of Israel,* *ver. 23.* viz. upon this errand, to take Elisha, they saw it was to no purpose to attempt that, nor would any of their bands be persuaded to make an assault on so great and good a man; the most glorious victory over an enemy is to turn him into a friend.

24. ¶ And it came to pass after this, that Ben-hadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria. 25. And there was a great famine in Samaria: and behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of doves dung for five pieces of silver. 26. And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king. 27. And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn-floor, or out of the wine-press? 28. And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow. 29. So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son. 30. ¶ And it came to pass when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes, and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and behold, he had sackcloth within, upon his flesh. 31. Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day. 32. But Elisha sat in his house (and the elders sat with him) and the king sent a man from before him: but ere the messenger came to him, he said

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to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? look when the messenger cometh shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: is not the found of his master's feet behind him? 33. And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil is of the LORD, what should I wait for the LORD any longer?

This last paragraph of this chapter should of right have been the first of the next chapter, for it begins a new story, which is there continued and concluded.

Here is, 1. The siege which the king of Syria laid to Samaria: and the great distress which the city was reduced to thereby; the Syrians had soon forgot the kindnesses they had lately received in Samaria, and very ungratefully, for aught appears, without any provocation, took the destruction of it, *ver. 21.* These are base spirits that can never be obliged; the country we may suppose plundered and laid waste, when this capital city was brought to the last extremity, *ver. 25.* The dearth which had of late been in the land was probably the occasion of the emptiness of their stores, or the siege was so sudden that they had not time to lay in provisions, so that while the sword devoured without, the famine within was more grievous, *Lam. iv. 9.* for, it should seem, the Syrians designed not to storm the city, but to starve it; so great was the scarcity, that an ass's head, that has but little flesh on it, and that unfavoury, unwholesome, and ceremonially unclean, was sold for five pounds, and a small quantity of fitches, or lentils, or some such coarse corn, then called doves dung, no more of it than the quantity of six eggs, for five pieces of silver, about twelve or fifteen shillings. Learn to value plenty, and to be thankful for it; see how contemptible money is, when in time of famine it is so freely parted with for any thing that is eatable.

2. The sad complaint which a poor woman had to make to the king in the extremity of the famine: he was passing by upon the wall to give orders for the mounting of the guard, the putting of the anchors, the repair of the breaches, and the like, when a woman of the city cried to him, *Help, my lord, O king,* *ver. 26.* Whither should the subject in distress go for help but to the prince, who is by office the protector of right and the avenger of wrong? He returns but a melancholy answer, *ver. 27.* *If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I?* Some think it was a quarring word, and the language of his fretfulness; why dost thou expect any thing from me, when God himself deals thus hardly with us? Because he could not help her as he would, out of the floor or the wine-press, he would not help her at all; we must take heed of being made crois by crois providences. It rather seems to be a quieting word, let us be content, and make the best of our affliction, looking up to God, for till he help us I cannot help thee. (1.) He laments the emptiness of the floor and the wine-press, those were not as they had been, even the king's filled; we read, *ver. 25.* of great provisions which he had at command, sufficient for the entertainment of an army, yet now he has not wherewithal to relieve one poor woman; scarcity sometimes follows upon great plenty, we cannot be sure that *tomorrow shall be as this day,* *Psal. cxx. 6.* (2.) He acknowledgeth himself thereby disabled to help, unless God would help them. Note, Creatures are helpless things without God, for every creature is that, all that, and only that which he makes it to be. However, though he cannot help her, he is willing to hear her, *ver. 28.* *What aileth thee?* Is there any thing singular in thy case, or dost thou fare worse than thy neighbours? Truly yes, she and one of her neighbours had made a barbarous agreement, that all provisions failing, they should boil and eat her son first, and then her neighbour's: hers was eaten, (who can think of it without horror?) and now her neighbour hid hers, *ver. 28, 29.* See an instance of the dominion which the flesh has got above the spirit, when the most natural affections of the mind may be thus overpowered by the natural appetites of the body, see the word of God fulfilled; among the threatenings of God's judgments upon Israel for their sins this was one, *Deut. xxviii. 53—57.* that they should eat the flesh of their own children, which one would think incredible, yet it came to pass.

3. The king's indignation against Elisha upon this occasion; he lamented the calamity, *rent his clothes, and had sackcloth upon his flesh,* *ver. 30.* as one heartily concerned for the misery of his people, and that it was not in his power to help them; but he laments not his own iniquity, nor the iniquity of his people, which was the procuring cause of the calamity; is not sensible that his *ways and his doings have procured this to himself; this is his wickedness, for it is bitter;* the *folly of man perverts his way,* and then *his heart frets against the Lord;* instead of vowing to pull down the calves at Dan and Beth-el, or letting the law have its course against the prophets of Baal, and of the groves, he swears *the death of Elisha,* *ver. 31.* What, what is the matter? what has Elisha done? his head is the most innocent and valuable in all Israel, and yet that must be devoted and made an anathema. Thus in the days of the persecuting emperors, when the empire groaned under any extraordinary calamity, the fault was laid on the Christians, and they were doomed to destruction, *Christians ad leones;* perhaps Jehoram was in this heat against Elisha, because he had foretold this judgment, or had persuaded him to hold out, and not surrender, or rather because he did not by his prayers raise the siege, and relieve the city, which he thought he could do, but would not; whereas till they repented and reformed, and were ready for deliverance, they had no reason to expect that the prophet should pray for it.

4. The foresight Elisha had of the king's design against him, *ver. 32.* he sat in his house well composed, and the elders with him well employed, no doubt, while the king was like a wild bull in a net, or like the troubled sea when it cannot rest; he told the elders there was an officer coming from the king to cut off his head, and bid them stop him at the door, and not let him in, for the king his master was just following him, to revoke the order as we may suppose; the same spirit of prophecy that enabled Elisha to tell what was done at a distance, authorized him to call the king *the son of a murderer,* which unless we could produce such an extraordinary commission, it is not for us to imitate; far be it from us to despise dominion, and to speak evil of dignities. He appeals to the elders whether he had deserved to ill at the king's hands, see whether in this he be not the son of a murderer? For *what evil had Elisha done?* He had not desired the *woful day,* *Jer. xvii. 16.*

5. The king's passionate speech, when he came to prevent the execution of his edict for the beheading of Elisha; he seems to have been in a struggle between his convictions and his corruptions, knew not what to say, but seeing things brought to the last extremity, he even abandons himself to despair, *ver. 33.* *This evil is of the Lord,* wherein his notions were right, and well applied; it is a general truth that all penal evil is of the Lord, as the first cause, and sovereign judge, *Amos iii. 6.* and this we ought to apply to particular cases, if all evil, then this evil, whatever it is we are now groaning under, whoever are the instruments, God is the principal agent; but his inference from this truth was foolish and wicked, *What should I wait*

for the Lord any longer? When Eli, and David, and Job said, *It is of the Lord*, they grew patient upon it, but this bad man grew outrageous upon it, I will neither fear worse, for worse cannot, nor expect better, for better never will come; we are all undone, and there is no remedy. It is an unreasonable thing to be weary of waiting for God, for he is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him.

C H A P. VII.

Relief is here brought to Samaria and her king, when the case was in a manner desperate, and the king despairing. (1.) It is foretold by Elisha, and an unbelieving lord shut out from the benefit of it, ver. 1, 2. (2.) It is brought about, 1. By an unaccountable fright which God put the Syrians into ver. 6. which drove them to their heels, ver. 7. 2. By the seasonable discovery which four lepers made of this, ver. 3—5. and the account they gave of it to the court, ver. 8—11. 3. By the cautious trial which the king made of the truth of it, ver. 12—15. Lastly, the event answered the prediction, both in the sudden plenty, ver. 16. and the death of the unbelieving lord, ver. 17—20. for no word of God shall fall to the ground.

1. **THEN** Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD, Thus saith the LORD, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. 2. Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned, answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

Here, 1. Elisha foretels that notwithstanding the great straits that the city of Samaria was reduced to, within twenty-four hours they should have plenty, *ver. 1.* The king of Israel despaired of it, and grew weary of waiting, then Elisha said this, then, when things were at the worst; man's extremity is God's opportunity of magnifying his own power, his time to appear for his people is when *their strength is gone*, Deut. xxxii. 36. Then, when they had given over expecting help, it came: *When the son of man comes, shall he find faith of the earth?* Luke xviii. 8. The king said, *what should I wait for the Lord any longer?* And perhaps some of the elders were ready to say the same; well, saith Elisha, you hear what these say, *now hear ye the word of the Lord*, hear what he saith, hear it and heed it, hear it and believe it; to-morrow corn shall be sold at the usual rate in the gate of Samaria, that is, (1.) The siege shall be raised, for the gate of the city shall be opened, and the market shall be held there as formerly; the return of peace is thus expressed, *Judg. v. 11. Then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates*, to buy and sell there. (2.) The consequence of that shall be great plenty, this would in time follow of course, but that corn should be thus cheap in so short a time, was quite beyond what could be thought of; though the king of Israel had just now threatened Elisha's life, God promises to save his life and the life of his people, for *where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound.*

2. A peer of Israel, that happened to be present, openly declared his disbelief of his prediction, *ver. 2.* He was a courtier, whom the king had an affection for, as the man of his right hand, on whom he leaned, *i. e.* on whose prudence he much relied, and in whom he reposed a mighty confidence; he thought it impossible, unless God should rain corn out of the clouds, as once he did manna; no less than the repetition of Moses' miracle will serve him, though that of Elijah might serve to answer this intention, the increasing of the meal in the barrel.

3. The just doom past upon him for his infidelity, that he should see this great plenty for his conviction, and yet not eat of it to his comfort. Note, Unbelief is a sin by which men greatly dishonour and displease God, and deprive themselves of the favours he designed for them; the murmuring Israelites saw Canaan, but could not enter in because of unbelief; such (saith Bishop Patrick) will be the portion of those that believe not the promise of eternal life, they shall see it at a distance, Abraham afar off, but shall never taste of it; for they forfeit the benefit of the promise, if they cannot find in their heart to take God's word.

3. ¶ And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? 4. If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. 5. And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, *there was* no man there. 6. For the LORD had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, *even* the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. 7. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, *even* the camp as it *was*, and fled for their life. 8. And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence *also*, and went and hid it. 9. Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning-light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household. 10. So they came,

and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and behold, *there was* no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they *were*. 11. And he called the porters, and they told it to the king's house within.

We are here told,

1. How the siege of Samaria was raised in the evening, at the edge of night, *ver. 6, 7.* not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, striking terror upon the spirits of the besiegers; here was not a sword drawn against them, not a drop of blood shed, it was not by thunder or hailstones that they were discomfited, nor were they slain as Sennacherib's army before Jerusalem by a destroying angel; but, (1.) *The Lord made them to hear a noise of chariots and horses*; the Syrians that besieged Dothan had their fight imposed upon, *chap. vi. 18.* these had their hearing imposed upon, for God knows how to work upon every sense pursuant to his own counsels; as he makes the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, so he makes the deaf and the blind, Exod. iv. 11. Whether the noise was really made in the air by the ministry of angels, or whether it was only a sound in their ears, is not certain; which soever it was, it was from God, who both brings the wind out of his treasures, and *formeth the spirit of man within him*; the sight of horses and chariots had encouraged the prophet's servant, *chap. vi. 17.* The noise of horses and chariots terrified the hosts of Syria, for notice from the invisible world are either very comfortable or very dreadful, according as men are at peace with God or at war with him.

(2.) Hearing this noise, they concluded the king of Israel had certainly procured assistance from some foreign power, he has hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, there was, for ought we know, but one king of Egypt, and what kings there were of the Hittites nobody can imagine; but as they were imposed upon by that dreadful sound in their ears, so they imposed upon themselves by the interpretation they made of it; had they supposed the king of Judah to have come with his forces, there had been more of probability in it, than to dream of the kings of the Hittites and the Egyptians; if the fancies of any of them raised this spectre, yet their reasons might soon have laid it; how could the king of Israel, who was closely besieged, hold intelligence with those distant princes? What had he to hire them with? It was impossible but some notice would come before the motions of so great an host; but *they were in great fear, where no fear was.*

(3.) Hereupon they all fled with incredible precipitation, as for their lives, left their camp as it was, and even their horses, that might have hastened their flight, they could not stay to take with them, *ver. 7.* none of them had so much sense as to send out scouts to discover the supposed enemy, much less courage enough to face the enemy, though fatigued with a long march; *the wicked flee when none pursues*; God can when he pleaseth, dispirit the boldest and most brave, and make the stoutest heart to tremble; they that will not fear God, he can make them fear at the shaking of a leaf.

2. How the Syrians flight was discovered by four leprous men. Samaria is delivered, and doth not know it; the watchmen on the walls were not aware of the retreat of the enemy, so silently did they steal away, but providence employs four lepers to be the intelligencers, who had their lodging without the gate, being excluded the city, as ceremonially unclean; the Jews say they were Gehazi and his three sons: perhaps Gehazi might be one of them, which might make him be taken notice of by the king, *chap. viii. 4.* See here,

1. How these lepers reasoned themselves into a resolution to make a visit in the night to the camp of the Syrians, *ver. 3, 4.* They were ready to perish for hunger, none passed through the gate to relieve them; should they go into the city, there was nothing to be had there, they must die in the streets; should they sit still, they must pine to death in their cottage: they therefore determine to go over to the enemy, and throw themselves upon their mercy; if they killed them, better die by the sword than by famine, one death than a thousand; but perhaps they would save them alive, as objects of compassion; common prudence will put us upon that method which may mend our condition, but cannot make it worse. The prodigal son resolves to return to his father, whose displeasure he had reason to fear, rather than perish with hunger in the far country. These lepers conclude, if they kill us we shall but die, and happy they who in another sense can thus speak of dying; we shall but die, that is the worst of it, not die and be damned, not be hurt of the second death. According to this resolution, they went in the beginning of the night to the camp of the Syrians, and, to their great surprise, found it wholly deserted, not a man to be seen or heard in it, *ver. 5.* Providence ordered it, that these lepers came as soon as ever the Syrians were fled, for they fled in the twilight, (the evening twilight) *ver. 7.* and in the twilight the lepers came, *ver. 5.* and so no time was lost.

2. How they reasoned themselves into a resolution to bring tidings of this to the city; they filled their bellies in the first tent they came to, *ver. 8.* and then began to think of enriching themselves with plunder; but they corrected themselves, *ver. 9.* *We do not well*, to conceal those good tidings from the community we are members of, under colour of being revenged upon them for excluding us their society; it was the law that did it, not they; and therefore let us bring them the news, though it wake them from sleep, it will be *life from the dead* to them: their own consciences told them that some mischief would befall them if they acted separately, and sought themselves only; selfish narrow-spirited people cannot expect to prosper, the most comfortable prosperity is that which our brethren share with us in. According to this resolution, they returned to the gate, and acquainted the sentinel with what they had discovered, *ver. 10.* who straightway brought the intelligence to court, *ver. 11.* and it was nevertheless acceptable for being first brought by lepers.

12. ¶ And the king rose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now shew you what the Syrians have done to us: they know that we be hungry, therefore are they gone out of the camp, to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city. 13. And one of his servants answered and said, Let *some* take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city (behold, they *are* as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it: behold, I *say*, they *are* even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed) and let us send and see. 14. They took therefore two chariot-horses,

horses, and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see. 15. And they went after them unto Jordan, and lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste: and the messengers returned and told the king. 16. And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD. 17. ¶ And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned, to have the charge of the gate: and the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him. 18. And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to-morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria: 19. And that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. 20. And so it fell out unto him for the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died.

Here is, 1. The king's jealousy of a stratagem in the Syrians retreat, *ver. 12.* he feared they withdrew into an ambush, to draw out the besieged, that they might fall on them with more advantage; he knew he had no reason to expect that God would appear thus wonderfully for him, having forfeited his favour by his unbelief and impatience: he knew no reason the Syrians had to fly, for it doth not appear that he or any of his attendants heard the noise of the chariots which the Syrians were frightened at; those who, like him, are *unstable in all their ways*, let them not think to receive any thing from God; nay, a guilty conscience fears the worst, and makes men suspicious.

2. The course they took for their satisfaction, and to prevent their falling into a snare; they sent out spies to see what was become of the Syrians, and found they were all fled indeed, commanders as well as common soldiers; they could track them by the garments which they threw off, and left by their way, for their greater expedition, *ver. 15.* He that gave this advice seems very sensible of the deplorable condition the people were in, *ver. 13.* for, speaking of the horses that were many of them dead, and the rest ready to perish for hunger, he saith, and repeats it, *They are as all the multitude of Israel*: Israel used to glory in their multitude, but now they are diminished and brought low; he advised to send five horsemen, but it should seem there were only two fit to be sent, and those chariot-horses, *ver. 14.* Now the Lord repented himself concerning his servants, when he saw that their strength was gone, *Dent. xxxii. 36.*

3. The plenty that was in Samaria from the plunder of the camp of the Syrians, *ver. 16.* Had the Syrians been governed by the modern policies of war, when they could not take their bag and baggage and their tents with them, they would rather have burnt them, (as it is common to do with the forage of a country) than let them fall into their enemies hands; but God intended that the besieging of Samaria, which was intended for its ruin, should turn to its advantage, and that Israel should now be enriched with the spoil of the Syrians, as of old with those of the Egyptians. Here see, (1.) The wealth of the sinner laid up for the just, *Job xxvii. 16, 17.* and the spoilers spoiled, *Isa. xxxiii. 1.* (2.) The wants of Israel supplied in a way that they little thought of, which should encourage us to depend upon the power and goodness of God in our greatest straits. (3.) The word of Elisha fulfilled to a title, *a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel*; they that spoiled the camp had not only enough to supply themselves with, but an overplus to sell at an easy rate for the benefit of others, and so even they that tarried at home did divide the spoil, *Psal. lxxviii. 12.* *Isa. xxxiii. 23.* God's promise may be safely relied on, for no word of his shall fall to the ground.

4. The death of the unbelieving courtier, that questioned the truth of Elisha's word; divine threatenings will as surely be accomplished as divine promises; *he that believeth not shall be damned*, stands as firm as *he that believeth shall be saved*. This lord, (1.) Was preferred by the king to the charge of the gate, *ver. 17.* to keep the peace, and to see that there was no tumult or disorder in dividing and disposing of the spoil; so much trust did the king repose in him, and in his prudence and gravity, and so much did he delight to honour him; he that will be great, let him serve the public: (2.) Was trodden to death by the people in the gate, either by accident, the crowd being exceeding great, and he in the thickest of it, or perhaps designedly, because he abused his power, and was imperious, in restraining the people from satisfying their hunger; however it was, God's justice was glorified, and the word of Elisha was fulfilled, he saw the plenty for the silencing and shaming of his unbelief, corn cheap without opening windows in heaven, and therein saw his own folly in preferring to God, but he did not eat of the plenty he saw; *when he was about to fill his belly*, God cast the fury of his wrath upon him, *Job. xx. 23.* and it came between the cup and the lip; justly are those tantalized with the world's promises that think themselves tantalized with the promises of God; if believing shall not be seeing, seeing shall not be enjoying.

This matter is repeated, and the event very particularly compared with the prediction, *ver. 18, 19, 20.* that we might take special notice of it, and might learn, (1.) How hainously God resents our distrust of him, and his power, providence and promise; when Israel said, *Can God furnish a table?* The Lord heard it, and was wroth: infinite wisdom will not be limited by our folly; God never promiseth the end, but he knows where to provide the means. (2.) How uncertain life is, and the enjoyments of it; honour and power cannot secure men from sudden and inglorious deaths, he whom the king leaned upon, the people trod upon; who fancied himself the stay and support of the government, is trampled under foot as the mire in the streets; thus hath the pride of men's glory been often stained. (3.) How certain God's threatenings are, and how sure to light on the guilty and obnoxious heads; let all men fear before the great God, who treads upon princes as mortar, and is terrible to the kings of the earth.

C H A P. VIII.

The passages of story recorded in this chapter oblige us to look back. (1.) We have read before of a Shunammite woman that was a kind benefactor to Elisha, now here we are told how she fared the better for it afterwards in the advice Elisha gave her, and the favour the

king shewed her for his sake, *ver. 1-5.* (2.) We read before of the designation of Hazael to the king of Syria, *1 Kings xix. 15.* and here we have an account of his elevation to that throne, and the way he forced for himself to it, by killing his master, *ver. 7-15.* (3.) We read before of Jehoram's reigning over Judah in the room of his father Jehoshaphat, *1 Kings xxii. 50.* now here we have a short and sad history of his short and wicked reign, *ver. 16-24.* and the beginning of the history of the reign of his son Ahaziah, *ver. 25-29.*

1. THEN spake Elisha unto the woman (whose son he had restored to life) saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the LORD hath called for a famine, and it shall also come upon the land seven years. 2. And the woman arose, and did after the saying of the man of God: and she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years. 3. And it came to pass at the seven years end, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines: and she went forth to cry unto the king for her house, and for her land. 4. And the king talked with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done. 5. And it came to pass as he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that behold, the woman whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house, and for her land. And Gehazi, said, my lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life. 6. And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field, since the day that she left the land, even till now.

Here we have,

1. The wickedness of Israel punished with a long famine, one of God's sore judgments often threatened in the law; *Canaan*, that fruitful land, is turned into barrenness, for the iniquity of them that dwell therein. The famine in Samaria was soon relieved, by the raising of the siege, but neither that judgment nor that mercy had a due influence upon them, and therefore the Lord calls for another famine, for when he judgeth, he will overcome; if the lesser judgments do not prevail to bring men to repentance, he will send greater and longer; they are at his beck, and will come when he calls for them. He doth by his ministers call for reformation and obedience, and if those calls be not regarded, we may expect he will call for some plague or other, for he will be heard; this famine continued seven years, as long again as that in Elijah's time, for if men will walk contrary to him he will heat the furnace yet hotter.

2. The kindness of the good Shunammite to the prophet rewarded, by the care that was taken of her in that famine; she was not indeed fed by miracle, as the widow of Sarepta was, but, (1.) She had notice given her of this famine before it came, that she might provide accordingly, and was directed to remove to some other country, any where but in Israel she would find plenty; it was a great advantage to Egypt in Joseph's time that they had notice of the famine before it came, so it was to this Shunammite, others would be forced to remove at last, after they had long borne the grievances of the famine, and had wasted their substance, and could not settle elsewhere upon such good terms as she might that went early, before the crowd, and took her stock with her unbroken; it is our happiness to foresee an evil, and our wisdom, when we foresee it, to hide ourselves. (2.) Providence gave her a comfortable settlement in the land of the Philistines, who, though subdued by David, yet were not wholly rooted out; it seems the famine was peculiar to the land of Israel, and other countries that joined close to them had plenty at the same time, which plainly shewed the immediate hand of God in it, as in the plague of Egypt, when they distinguished between the Israelites and the Egyptians, and that the sins of Israel, against whom this judgment was directly levelled, were more provoking to God than the sins of their neighbours, because of their profession of relation to God; *You only have I known, therefore will I punish you*, *Amos iii. 2.* Other countries had rain when they had none, were free from locusts and caterpillars when they were eaten up with them, for some think this was the famine spoken of, *Joel i. 3, 4.* It is strange that when there was plenty in the neighbouring countries, there were not those that made it their business to import corn into the land of Israel, which might have prevented the inhabitants removing, but as they were beset with their idolatries, so they were insatiable even in the matters of their civil interest.

3. Her petition to the king at her return, favoured by the seasonableness of her application to him.

1. When the famine was over, she returned out the land of the Philistines, that was no proper place for an Israelite any longer than there was necessity for it, for there she could not keep her new-moons and her sabbaths as she used to do in her own country, among the schools of the prophets, *chap. iv. 23.*

2. At her return she found herself kept out of the possession of her own estate, it being either confiscated to the exchequer, seized by the lord, or usurped in her absence by some of the neighbours, or perhaps the person she had intrusted with the management of it proved false, and would neither resign it to her, nor come to any account with her for the mess profits; so hard is it to find a person that one can put a confidence in in a time of trouble, *Prov. xxv. 19.* *Micah vii. 5.*

3. She made her application to the king himself for redress, for it seems (be it observed to his praise) he was easy of access, and did himself take cognizance of the complaints of his injured subjects; time was when she dwelt so securely among her own people that she had no occasion to be spoken for to the king or the captain of the host, *chap. iv. 13.* but now her own familiar friends, in whom she trusted, proved so unjust and unkind, that she was glad to appeal to the king against them; such uncertainty there is in the creature, that they may fail us which we most depend upon, and that befriend us which we think we shall never need.

4. She found the king talking with Gehazi about Elisha's miracles, *ver. 4.* It was his shame that he needed now to be informed concerning them, when he might have acquainted himself, with them as they were done from Elisha himself, if he had not been willing to shut his eyes against the convincing evidences of his mission, yet it was his praise that he was now better disposed, and would rather talk with a leper that was capable of giving a good account

for the Lord any longer? When Eli, and David, and Job said, *It is of the Lord*, they grew patient upon it, but this bad man grew outrageous upon it, I will neither fear worse, for worse cannot, nor expect better, for better never will come; we are all undone, and there is no remedy. It is an unreasonable thing to be weary of waiting for God, for he is a God of judgment, and blessed are all they that wait for him.

C H A P. VII.

Relief is here brought to Samaria and her king, when the case was in a manner desperate, and the king despairing. (1.) It is foretold by Elisha, and an unbelieving lord shut out from the benefit of it, ver. 1, 2. (2.) It is brought about, 1. By an unaccountable fright which God put the Syrians into ver. 6. which drove them to their heels, ver. 7. 2. By the seasonable discovery which four lepers made of this, ver. 3—5. and the account they gave of it to the court, ver. 8—11. 3. By the cautious trial which the king made of the truth of it, ver. 12—15. Lastly, the event answered the prediction, both in the sudden plenty, ver. 16. and the death of the unbelieving lord, ver. 17—20. for no word of God shall fall to the ground.

1. **THEN** Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD, Thus saith the LORD, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria. 2. Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned, answered the man of God, and said, Behold, if the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

Here, 1. Elisha foretels that notwithstanding the great straits that the city of Samaria was reduced to, within twenty-four hours they should have plenty, *ver. 1.* The king of Israel despaired of it, and grew weary of waiting, then Elisha said this, then, when things were at the worst; man's extremity is God's opportunity of magnifying his own power, his time to appear for his people is when *their strength is gone*, Deut. xxxii. 36. Then, when they had given over expecting help, it came: *When the son of man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?* Luke xviii. 8. The king said, *what should I wait for the Lord any longer?* And perhaps some of the elders were ready to say the same; well, saith Elisha, you hear what these say, *now hear ye the word of the Lord*, hear what he saith, hear it and heed it, hear it and believe it; to-morrow corn shall be sold at the usual rate in the gate of Samaria, that is, (1.) The siege shall be raised, for the gate of the city shall be opened, and the market shall be held there as formerly; the return of peace is thus expressed, *Judg. v. 11. Then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates, to buy and sell there.* (2.) The consequence of that shall be great plenty, this would in time follow of course, but that corn should be thus cheap in so short a time, was quite beyond what could be thought of; though the king of Israel had just now threatened Elisha's life, God promises to save his life and the life of his people, for *where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound.*

2. A peer of Israel, that happened to be present, openly declared his disbelief of his prediction, *ver. 2.* He was a courtier, whom the king had an affection for, as the man of his right hand, on whom he leaned, *i. e.* on whose prudence he much relied, and in whom he reposed a mighty confidence; he thought it impossible, unless God should rain corn out of the clouds, as once he did manna; no less than the repetition of Moses's miracle will serve him, though that of Elijah might serve to answer this intention, the increasing of the meal in the barrel.

3. The just doom past upon him for his infidelity, that he should see this great plenty for his conviction, and yet not eat of it to his comfort. Note, Unbelief is a sin by which men greatly dishonour and displease God, and deprive themselves of the favours he designed for them; the murmuring Israelites saw Canaan, but could not enter in because of unbelief; such (saith Bishop Patrick) will be the portion of those that believe not the promise of eternal life, they shall see it at a distance, Abraham afar off, but shall never taste of it; for they forfeit the benefit of the promise, if they cannot find in their heart to take God's word.

3. ¶ And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? 4. If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. 5. And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there. 6. For the LORD had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. 7. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their life. 8. And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it. 9. Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning-light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household. 10. So they came,

and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were. 11. And he called the porters, and they told it to the king's house within.

We are here told,

1. How the siege of Samaria was raised in the evening, at the edge of night, *ver. 6, 7.* not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts, striking terror upon the spirits of the besiegers; here was not a sword drawn against them, not a drop of blood shed, it was not by thunder or hailstones that they were discomfited, nor were they slain as Sennacherib's army before Jerusalem; a destroying angel; but, (1.) *The Lord made them to hear a noise of chariots and horses*; the Syrians that besieged Dothan had their fight imposed upon, *chap. vi. 18.* these had their hearing imposed upon, for God knows how to work upon every sense pursuant to his own counsels; as he makes the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, so he makes the deaf and the blind, *Exod. iv. 11.* Whether the noise was really made in the air by the ministry of angels, or whether it was only a sound in their ears, is not certain; which soever it was, it was from God, who both *brings the wind out of his treasures*, and *formeth the spirit of man within him*; the sight of horses and chariots had encouraged the prophet's servant, *chap. vi. 17.* The noise of horses and chariots terrified the hosts of Syria, for notice from the invisible world are either very comfortable or very dreadful, according as men are at peace with God or at war with him.

(2.) Hearing this noise, they concluded the king of Israel had certainly procured assistance from some foreign power, he has *hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians*, there was, for ought we know, but one king of Egypt, and what kings there were of the Hittites nobody can imagine; but as they were imposed upon by that dreadful sound in their ears, so they imposed upon themselves by the interpretation they made of it; had they supposed the king of Judah to have come with his forces, there had been more of probability in it, than to dream of the *kings of the Hittites and the Egyptians*; if the fancies of any of them raised this spectre, yet their reasons might soon have laid it; how could the king of Israel, who was closely besieged, hold intelligence with those distant princes? What had he to hire them with? It was impossible but some notice would come before the motions of so great an host; but *they were in great fear, where no fear was.*

(3.) Hereupon they all fled with incredible precipitation, as for their lives, left their camp as it was, and even their horses, that might have hastened their flight, they could not stay to take with them, *ver. 7.* none of them had so much sense as to send out scouts to discover the supposed enemy, much less courage enough to face the enemy, though fatigued with a long march; *the wicked flee when no pursues*; God can when he pleaseth, dispirit the boldest and most brave, and make the stoutest heart to tremble; they that will not fear God, he can make them fear at the shaking of a leaf.

2. How the Syrians flight was discovered by four leprous men. Samaria is delivered, and doth not know it; the watchmen on the walls were not aware of the retreat of the enemy, so silently did they steal away, but providence employs four lepers to be the intelligencers, who had their lodging without the gate, being excluded the city, as ceremonially unclean; the Jews say they were Gehazi and his three sons: perhaps Gehazi might be one of them, which might make him be taken notice of by the king, *chap. viii. 4.* See here,

1. How these lepers reasoned themselves into a resolution to make a visit in the night to the camp of the Syrians, *ver. 3, 4.* They were ready to perish for hunger, none passed through the gate to relieve them; should they go into the city, there was nothing to be had there, they must die in the streets; should they sit still, they must pine to death in their cottage: they therefore determine to go over to the enemy, and throw themselves upon their mercy; if they killed them, better die by the sword than by famine, one death than a thousand; but perhaps they would save them alive, as objects of compassion; common prudence will put us upon that method which may mend our condition, but cannot make it worse. The prodigal son resolves to return to his father, whose displeasure he had reason to fear, rather than perish with hunger in the far country. These lepers conclude, if they kill us we shall but die, and happy they who in another sense can thus speak of dying; we shall but die, that is the worst of it, not die and be damned, not be hurt of the second death. According to this resolution, they went in the beginning of the night to the camp of the Syrians, and, to their great surprise, found it wholly deserted, not a man to be seen or heard in it, *ver. 5.* Providence ordered it, that these lepers came as soon as ever the Syrians were fled, for they fled in the twilight, (the evening twilight) *ver. 7.* and in the twilight the lepers came, *ver. 5.* and so no time was lost.

2. How they reasoned themselves into a resolution to bring tidings of this to the city; they filled their bellies in the first tent they came to, *ver. 8.* and then began to think of enriching themselves with plunder; but they corrected themselves, *ver. 9.* *We do not well*, to conceal those good tidings from the community we are members of, under colour of being revenged upon them for excluding us their society; it was the law that did it, not they, and therefore let us bring them the news, though it wake them from sleep, it will be *life from the dead* to them: their own consciences told them that some mischief would befall them if they acted separately, and sought themselves only; selfish narrow-spirited people cannot expect to prosper, the most comfortable prosperity is that which our brethren share with us in. According to this resolution, they returned to the gate, and acquainted the centinel with what they had discovered, *ver. 10.* who straightway brought the intelligence to court, *ver. 11.* and it was nevertheless acceptable for being first brought by lepers.

12. ¶ And the king rose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now shew you what the Syrians have done to us: they know that we be hungry, therefore are they gone out of the camp, to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city. 13. And one of his servants answered and said, Let some take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city (behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel that are left in it: behold, I say, they are even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed) and let us send and see. 14. They took therefore two chariot-horses,

horses, and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see. 15. And they went after them unto Jordan, and lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste: and the messengers returned and told the king. 16. And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD. 17. ¶ And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned, to have the charge of the gate: and the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him. 18. And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to-morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria: 19. And that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof. 20. And so it fell out unto him for the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died.

Here is, 1. The king's jealousy of a stratagem in the Syrians retreat, ver. 12. he feared they withdrew into an ambush, to draw out the besieged, that they might fall on them with more advantage; he knew he had no reason to expect that God would appear thus wonderfully for him, having forfeited his favour by his unbelief and impatience: he knew no reason the Syrians had to fly, for it doth not appear that he or any of his attendants heard the noise of the chariots which the Syrians were frightened at; those who, like him, are *unstable in all their ways*, let them not think to receive any thing from God; nay, a guilty conscience fears the worth, and makes men suspicious.

2. The course they took for their satisfaction, and to prevent their falling into a snare; they sent out spies to see what was become of the Syrians, and found they were all fled indeed, commanders as well as common soldiers; they could track them by the garments which they threw off, and left by their way, for their greater expedition, ver. 15. He that gave this advice seems very sensible of the deplorable condition the people were in, ver. 13. for, speaking of the horses that were many of them dead, and the rest ready to perish for hunger, he saith, and repeats it, *They are as all the multitude of Israel*: Israel used to glory in their multitude, but now they are diminished and brought low; he advised to send five horsemen, but it should seem there were only two fit to be sent, and those chariot-horses, ver. 14. Now the Lord repented himself concerning his servants, when he saw that their strength was gone, Dent. xxxii. 36.

3. The plenty that was in Samaria from the plunder of the camp of the Syrians, ver. 16. Had the Syrians been governed by the modern policies of war, when they could not take their bag and baggage and their tents with them, they would rather have burnt them, (as it is common to do with the forage of a country) than let them fall into their enemies hands; but God intended that the besieging of Samaria, which was intended for its ruin, should turn to its advantage, and that Israel should now be enriched with the spoil of the Syrians, as of old with those of the Egyptians. Here see, (1.) The *wealth of the sinner laid up for the just*, Job xxvii. 16, 17. and the spoilers spoiled, Isa. xxxiii. 1. (2.) The wants of Israel supplied in a way that they little thought of, which should encourage us to depend upon the power and goodness of God in our greatest straits. (3.) The word of Elisha fulfilled to a tittle, *a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel*; they that spoiled the camp had not only enough to supply themselves with, but an overplus to sell at an easy rate for the benefit of others, and so even they that *travell'd at home did divide the spoil*, Psal. lxxviii. 12. Isa. xxxiii. 23. God's promise may be safely relied on, for no word of his shall fall to the ground.

4. The death of the unbelieving courtier, that questioned the truth of Elisha's word; divine threatenings will as surely be accomplished as divine promises; *he that believeth not shall be damned*, stands as firm as *he that believeth shall be saved*. This lord, (1.) Was preferred by the king to the charge of the gate, ver. 17. to keep the peace, and to see that there was no tumult or disorder in dividing and disposing of the spoil; so much trust did the king repose in him, and in his prudence and gravity, and so much did he delight to honour him; he that will be great, let him serve the public: (2.) Was trodden to death by the people in the gate, either by accident, the crowd being exceeding great, and he in the thickest of it, or perhaps designedly, because he abused his power, and was imperious, in restraining the people from satisfying their hunger; however it was, God's justice was glorified, and the word of Elisha was fulfilled, he saw the plenty for the silencing and shaming of his unbelief, corn cheap without opening windows in heaven, and therein saw his own folly in preferring to God, but he did not eat of the plenty he saw; *when he was about to fill his belly, God cast the fury of his wrath upon him*, Job. xx. 23. and it came between the cup and the lip; justly are those tantalized with the world's promises that think themselves tantalized with the promises of God; if believing shall not be seeing, seeing shall not be enjoying.

This matter is repeated, and the event very particularly compared with the prediction, ver. 18, 19, 20. that we might take special notice of it, and might learn, (1.) How hainously God resents our distrust of him, and his power, providence and promise; when Israel said, *Can God furnish a table?* The Lord heard it, and was wrath: infinite wisdom will not be limited by our folly; God never promiseth the end, but he knows where to provide the means. (2.) How uncertain life is, and the enjoyments of it; honour and power cannot secure men from sudden and inglorious deaths, he whom the king leaned upon, the people trod upon; who fancied himself the stay and support of the government, is trampled under foot as the mire in the streets; thus hath the pride of men's glory been often stained. (3.) How certain God's threatenings are, and how sure to light on the guilty and obnoxious heads; let all men fear before the great God, who *treads upon princes as mortar*, and is terrible to the kings of the earth.

C H A P. VIII.

The passages of story recorded in this chapter oblige us to look back.

(1.) We have read before of a Shunammite woman that was a kind benefactor to Elisha, now here we are told how she fared the better for it afterwards in the advice Elisha gave her, and the favour the

king shewed her for his sake, ver. 1—6. (2.) We read before of the designation of Hazael to the king of Syria, 1 Kings xix. 15. and here we have an account of his elevation to that throne, and the way he forced for himself to it, by killing his master, ver. 7—15. (3.) We read before of Jehoram's reigning over Judah in the room of his father Jehoshaphat, 1 Kings xxii. 50. now here we have a short and sad history of his short and wicked reign, ver. 16—24. and the beginning of the history of the reign of his son Ahaziah, ver. 25—29.

1. **T**HEN spake Elisha unto the woman (whose son he had restored to life) saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wheresoever thou canst sojourn: for the LORD hath called for a famine, and it shall also come upon the land seven years. 2. And the woman arose, and did after the saying of the man of God: and she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years. 3. And it came to pass at the seven years end, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines: and she went forth to cry unto the king for her house, and for her land. 4. And the king talked with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done. 5. And it came to pass as he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that behold, the woman whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house, and for her land. And Gehazi, said, my lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life. 6. And when the king asked the woman, she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that was hers, and all the fruits of the field, since the day that she left the land, even till now.

Here we have,

1. The wickedness of Israel punished with a long famine, one of God's fore judgments often threatened in the law; *Canaan, that fruitful land, is turned into barrenness*, for the iniquity of them that dwell therein. The famine in Samaria was soon relieved, by the raising of the siege, but neither that judgment nor that mercy had a due influence upon them, and therefore the Lord calls for another famine, for when he judgeth, he will overcome; if the lesser judgments do not prevail to bring men to repentance, he will send greater and longer; they are at his beck, and will come when he calls for them. He doth by his ministers call for reformation and obedience, and if those calls be not regarded, we may expect he will call for some plague or other, for he will be heard; this famine continued seven years, as long again as that in Elijah's time, for if men will walk contrary to him he will heat the furnace yet hotter.

2. The kindness of the good Shunammite to the prophet rewarded, by the care that was taken of her in that famine; she was not indeed fed by miracle, as the widow of Sarepta was, but, (1.) She had notice given her of this famine before it came, that she might provide accordingly, and was directed to remove to some other country, any where but in Israel she would find plenty; it was a great advantage to Egypt in Joseph's time that they had notice of the famine before it came, so it was to this Shunammite, others would be forced to remove at last, after they had long borne the grievances of the famine, and had wasted their substance, and could not settle elsewhere upon such good terms as she might that went early, before the crowd, and took her stock with her unbroken; it is our happiness to foresee an evil, and our wisdom, when we foresee it, to hide ourselves. (2.) Providence gave her a comfortable settlement in the land of the Philistines, who, though subdued by David, yet were not wholly rooted out; it seems the famine was peculiar to the land of Israel, and other countries that joined close to them had plenty at the same time, which plainly shewed the immediate hand of God in it, as in the plague of Egypt, when they distinguished between the Israelites and the Egyptians, and that the sins of Israel, against whom this judgment was directly levelled, were more provoking to God than the sins of their neighbours, because of their profession of relation to God; *You only have I known, therefore will I punish you*, Amos iii. 2. Other countries had rain when they had none, were free from locusts and caterpillars when they were eaten up with them, for some think this was the famine spoken of, Joel i. 3, 4. It is strange that when there was plenty in the neighbouring countries, there were not those that made it their business to import corn into the land of Israel, which might have prevented the inhabitants removing, but as they were beset with their idolatries, so they were intimated even in the matters of their civil interest.

3. Her petition to the king at her return, favoured by the reasonableness of her application to him.

1. When the famine was over, she returned out the land of the Philistines, that was no proper place for an Israelite any longer than there was necessity for it, for there she could not keep her new-moons and her sabbaths as she used to do in her own country, among the schools of the prophets, chap. iv. 23.

2. At her return she found herself kept out of the possession of her own estate, it being either confiscated to the exchequer, seized by the lord, or usurped in her absence by some of the neighbours, or perhaps the person she had intrusted with the management of it proved false, and would neither resign it to her, nor come to any account with her for the mess profits; so hard is it to find a person that one can put a confidence in in a time of trouble, Prov. xxv. 19. Micah vii. 5.

3. She made her application to the king himself for redress, for it seems (be it observed to his praise) he was easy of access, and did himself take cognizance of the complaints of his injured subjects; time was when she dwelt so securely among her own people that she had no occasion to be spoken for to the king or the captain of the host, chap. iv. 13. but now her own familiar friends, in whom she trusted, proved so unjust and unkind, that she was glad to appeal to the king against them; such uncertainty there is in the creature, that they may fail us which we most depend upon, and that befriend us which we think we shall never need.

4. She found the king talking with Gehazi about Elisha's miracles, ver. 4. It was his shame that he needed now to be informed concerning them, when he might have acquainted himself, with them as they were done, from Elisha himself, if he had not been willing to shut his eyes against the convincing evidences of his mission, yet it was his praise that he was now better disposed, and would rather talk with a leper that was capable of giving a good account

account of them, than continue ignorant of them. The law did not forbid all conversation with lepers, but only dwelling with them; there being then no priests in Israel, perhaps the king, or some one appointed by him, had the inspection of lepers, and passed the judgment upon them, which might bring him acquainted with Gehazi.

5. This happy coincidence befriended both Gehazi's narrative and her petition; providence is to be acknowledged in ordering the circumstances of events, for sometimes those that are minute in themselves prove of great consequence, as this here; for,

1. It made the king ready to believe Gehazi's narrative, when it was thus confirmed by the persons most nearly concerned; *this is the woman, and this her son*, let them speak for themselves, *ver. 5.* Thus did God even force him to believe what he might have had some colour to question, if he had only had Gehazi's word for it, because he was branded for a liar; witness his leprosy.

2. It made him ready to grant her request, for who would not be ready to favour one whom heaven had thus favoured, and to support a life which was given once and again by miracle? In consideration of this, the king gave orders that her land should be restored her, and all the profits that were made of it in her absence; if it were to himself that the land and profits had escheated, it was generous and kind to make so full a restitution; he would not (as Pharaoh did in Joseph's time) enrich the crown by the calamities of his subjects; if it were by some other person that her property was invaded, it was an act of justice in the king, and part of the duty of his place to do her right, *Psal. lxxxii. 3, 4. Prov. xxi. 9.* It is not enough for those in authority that they do no wrong themselves, but they must support the right of those that are wronged.

7. ¶ And Elisha came to Damascus; and Ben-hadad the king of Syria was sick, and it was told him, saying, The man of God is come hither. 8. And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go meet the man of God, and enquire of the LORD by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease? 9. So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels burden, and came and stood before him, and said, Thy son Ben-hadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease? 10. And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit, the LORD hath shewed me, that he shall surely die. 11. And he settled his countenance stedfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept. 12. And Hazael said, Why do I weep, my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child. 13. And Hazael said, But what, is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing? And Elisha answered, The LORD hath shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria. 14. So he departed from Elisha, and came to his master, who said to him, What said Elisha to thee? And he answered, He told me that thou shouldst surely recover. 15. And it came to pass on the morrow, that he took a thick cloth, and dipt it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died: and Hazael reigned in his stead.

Here, 1. We may enquire what brought Elisha to Damascus, the chief city of Syria? Was he sent to any but to the *last sheep of the house of Israel*? It seems he was, perhaps he went to make a visit to Naaman his convert, and to confirm him in his choice of the true religion, which was the more needful now, because it should seem he was now out of his place, for Hazael is supposed to be a captain of the host; either he resigned it, or was turned out of it, because he would not bow, or not bow heartily in the house of Rimmon; some think he went to Damascus upon account of the famine, or rather he went thither in obedience to the orders God gave Elijah, *1 Kings xix. 15. Go to Damascus to anoint Hazael, thou or thy successor.*

2. We may observe that Benhadad, a great king, rich and mighty, lay sick; no honour, wealth or power will secure men from the common diseases and disasters of human life; palaces and thrones lie as open to the arrests of sickness and death as the meanest cottage.

3. We may wonder that the king of Syria in his sickness should make Elisha his oracle; notice was soon brought him that *the man of God* (for by that title he was well known in Syria since he cured Naaman) was come to Damascus, *ver. 7.* Never in better time, saith Benhadad, *Go, and enquire of the Lord by him*; in his health he bowed in the house of Rimmon, but now he is sick, he is sick of his idol, and sends to enquire of the God of Israel; affliction brings those to God, who in their prosperity had made light of him; sometimes sickness opens mens eyes, and rectifies their mistakes. This is the more observable, (1.) Because it is not long since this Benhadad had sent a great force to treat Elisha as an enemy, *chap. vi. 1-4.* yet now he courts him as a prophet. Note among other instances of the change of mens minds by sickness and affliction, this is one, that it often gives them other thoughts of God's ministers, and teacheth them to value the counsels and prayers of those whom they had hated and despised.

To put an honour upon the prophet, 1. He sends to him, and doth not send for him, as if, with the centurion, he thought himself not worthy that the man of God should come under his roof. 2. He sends to him by Hazael, his prime minister of state, and not by a common messenger; it is no disparagement to the greatest of men to attend the prophets of the Lord; Hazael must go meet him at the place where he had appointed a meeting with his friends. 3. He sends him a noble present, *of every good thing of Damascus*, as much as loaded forty camels, *ver. 9.* testifying here his affection to the prophet, and bidding him welcome to Damascus, and providing for his sustenance while he sojourned there; it is probable Elisha accepted it, why should he not? though he refused Naaman's. 4. He orders Hazael to call him his son Benhadad; conforming to the language of Israel, who called the prophets father. Lastly, He put an honour upon him as one acquainted

with the secrets of heaven, when he enquired of him, *Shall I recover?* It is natural to us, to desire to know things to come in time, while things to come in eternity are little thought of or enquired after.

4. What passed between Hazael and Elisha is especially remarkable. (1.) Elisha answered his enquiry concerning the king, that he might recover, the disease was not mortal, but that he should die another way, *ver. 10.* not a natural, but a violent death; there are many ways out of the world, and sometimes, while men think to avoid one, they fall by another. (2.) He looked Hazael in the face with an unusual concern, till he made Hazael blush, and himself weep, *ver. 11.* The man of God could outface the man of war. It was not in Hazael's countenance that Elisha read what he would do, but God did at this time reveal it to him, and fetched tears from his eyes; the most foresight men have, the more grief they are liable to. (3.) When Hazael asked him why he wept, he told him what a great deal of mischief he foresaw he would do to the Israel of God, *ver. 12.* what desolation he would make of their strong holds, and barbarous destruction of their men, women, and children; the sins of Israel provoked God to give them up into the hands of their cruel enemies, yet Elisha wept to think that ever Israelites should be thus abused, for though he foretold, he did not desire the woe of the day; for what havoc war makes, what havoc sin makes, and how the nature of man is changed by the fall, and dript even of humanity itself. (4.) Hazael is mightily surprised at this prediction, *ver. 13. What, saith he, Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?* This great thing he looks upon to be, 1. An act of great power, not to be done but by a crowned head; it must be some mighty potentate that can think to prevail thus against Israel, and then fore not he; many are raised to that dominion which they never thought of, and it proves it may be *to their own hurt*, *Eccles. viii. 9.* 2. An act of great barbarity, which could not be done but by one lost to all honour and virtue, therefore, saith he, it is what I shall never find in my heart to be guilty of: *Is thy servant a dog, to rend and tear, and devour?* Unless I were a dog I could not do it. See here, (1.) What ill thoughts he had of the sin, he looked upon it to be great wickedness, fitter for a brute, for a beast of prey to do than a man. Note, It is possible for a wicked man, under the convictions and restraints of natural conscience, to express great abhorrence of sin, and yet afterwards to be well reconciled to it. (2.) What good thoughts he had of himself, and better than he deserved; he thought it impossible he should do such ill natured things as the prophet foretold. Note, We are apt to think ourselves sufficiently armed against those sins which yet we are afterwards overcome by, as Peter, *Matt. xxvi. 35.* Lastly, In answer to this, Elisha only told him *he should be king over Syria*, then he would have power to do it, and then he would find in his heart to do it; *Hazael's change mens tempers and manners*, and seldom for the better; thou knowest not what thou wilt do when thou comest to be king, but I tell thee, this thou wilt do; those that are little and low in the world, cannot imagine how strong the temptations of power and prosperity are, which, if ever they arrive to, they will find how deceitful their hearts were, and how much worse than they suspected.

What mischief Hazael did to his master hereupon, which, if he took any occasion to do from what Elisha had said, the fault was on him, not on the word.

(1.) He basely cheated his master and belied the prophet, *ver. 14. He told me then shouldst certainly recover*, this was abominably false, he told him he should die, *ver. 10.* but he unfairly and unfaithfully concealed that, either because he was loth to put the king out of humour with bad news, or because hereby he might the more effectually carry on his design against his life, which his fingers itched to be at, when he was told he should be his successor; the devil ruins men, by telling them they shall certainly recover and do well, and so rocking them asleep in security, than which nothing more fatal; this was an injury to the king, who lost the benefit of this warning to prepare for death, and an injury to Elisha, who would be counted a false prophet.

(2.) He barbarously murdered his master, and so made good the prophet's word, *ver. 15.* He dipt a thick cloth in cold water, and spread that upon his face, under pretence of cooling and refreshing him, but so that it stopt his breath, and stifled him presently, he being weak, and not able to help himself, or perhaps asleep; such a bubble is the life of the greatest of men, and so much exposed are princes to violence; Hazael, that was Benhadad's confidant, is his murderer, and some think, was not suspected, nor did it ever come out but by the pen of this inspired historian; we found this haughty monarch, *1 Kings xx. the terror of the mighty in the land of the living*, but he *goes down slain to the pit with his iniquity upon his bones*, *Ezek. xxxii. 25.*

16. ¶ And in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehothaphat being then king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign. 17. Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. 18. And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab: for the daughter of Ahab was his wife; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD. 19. Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah, for David his servant's sake, as he promised him to give him alway a light, and to his children. 20. ¶ In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah and made a king over themselves. 21. So Joram went over to Zair, and all the chariots with him, and he rose by night and smote the Edomites which compassed him about: and the captains of the chariots, and the people fled into their tents. 22. Yet Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time. 23. And the rest of the acts of Joram, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 24. And Joram slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

We have here a brief account of the life and reign of Jehoram, (or Joram) one of the worst of the kings of Judah, but the son and successor of Jehoshaphat, one of the best. Note, 1. Parents cannot give grace to their children; many themselves that have been godly, have had the grief and shame of seeing those that came forth out of their bowels wicked and vile; let not the families that are thus afflicted think it strange. 2. If the children

of good parents prove wicked, commonly they are worse than others, the unclean spirit brings in seven others more wicked than himself, *Luke xi. 26.* 3. A nation is sometimes justly punished with the miseries of a bad reign, for not improving the blessings and advantages of a good one.

Concerning this Jehoram observes,

1. The general idea here given of his badness, *ver. 18.* *He did as the house of Ahab,* and worse he could not do; his character is taken from the bad example he followed, for men are according to the company they converse with, and the copies they write after; no mistake is more fatal to young people, than a mistake in the choice of those whom they would recommend themselves to, and take their measures from, and whose good opinion they valued themselves by; Jehoram chose the house of Ahab for his pattern rather than his father's house, and it was his ruin; we have a particular account of his wickedness, *2 Chron. xxi.* murder, idolatry, persecution, every thing that was bad.

2. The occasions of his badness; his father was a very good man, and, no doubt, took care to have him taught the good knowledge of the Lord, but, (1.) It is certain he did ill to marry him to the daughter of Ahab; no good could come by an alliance with an idolatrous family, but all mischief with such a daughter of such a mother as Athaliah the daughters of Jezebel; the degeneracy of the old world took rise from the unequal yoking of professors with profane; those that are ill-matched, are already half-ruined. (2.) I doubt he will not do well to make him king in his own life-time, it is said here, *ver. 16.* *he began to reign, Jehoashaphat being then king,* hereby he gratified his pride, (than which nothing is more pernicious to young people) indulged him in his ambition, in hopes to reform him by humouring him, and so brought a curse upon his family, as Eli did, *whose sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not;* Jehoashaphat had made this wicked son of his vice-roy once when he went with Ahab to Ramoth-gilead, from which Jehoashaphat's seventeenth year, *1 Kings xxii. 51.* is made Jehoram's second, *2 Kings i. 17.* but afterwards, in his twenty-second year, he made him partner in his government, and from thence Joram's eight years are to be dated, three years before his father's death; it has been hurtful to many young men to come too soon to their estates; Samuel got nothing by *making his sons judges.*

3. The rebukes of providence which he was under for his badness. (1.) The Edomites revolted, who had been under the government of the kings of Judah ever since David's time, about one hundred and fifty years, *ver. 20.* He attempted to reduce them, and gave them a defeat, *ver. 21.* but he could not improve the advantage he had got, so as to recover his dominion over them; yet Edom revolted, *ver. 22.* and the Edomites were after this bitter enemies to the Jews, as appears by the prophecy of Obadiah, and *Psal. cxxxvii. 7.* Now Isaac's prophecy was fulfilled, that this Esau the elder should serve Jacob the younger, yet in process of time, he should *break that yoke from off his neck,* *Gen. xxvii. 40.* (2.) Libnah revolted, that was a city in Judah, in the heart of his country, a priest's city, the inhabitants of that city shook off his government, *because he had forsaken God,* and would have compelled them to do so too, *2 Chron. xxi. 10, 11.* and that they might preserve their religion set up for a free state, perhaps other cities did the same. (3.) His reign was short, God cut him off in the midst of his days, when he was but forty years old, and had reigned but eight years; *bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days.*

4. The gracious care of providence for the keeping up of the kingdom of Judah, and the house of David, notwithstanding the apostacies and calamities of Jehoram's reign, *ver. 19.* *Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah,* he could easily have done it, he might justly have done it, it would have been no loss to him to have done it, yet he would not do it for David's sake, not for the sake of any merit of his which could challenge his favour to his family as a debt, but for the sake of a promise made to him, that he should always have a lamp, *i. e.* succession of kings from one generation to another; by which his name should be kept bright and illustrious, as a lamp is kept burning by a constant fresh supply of oil; that his family should never be extinct, till it terminated in the Messiah, that son of David, on whom was to be *hung all the glory of his Father's house,* and in whose everlasting kingdom that promise to David is filled, *Psal. cxxxvii. 17.* *I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.*

5. The conclusion of this impious and inglorious reign, *ver. 23, 24.* Nothing peculiar is here said of him, but we are told, *2 Chron. xxi. 19, 20.* that he *died of sore diseases,* and *died without being desired.*

25. ¶ In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign. 26. Two-and-twenty years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Athaliah, the daughter of Omri king of Israel. 27. And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the LORD, as did the house of Ahab: for he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab. 28. ¶ And he went with Joram the son of Ahab, to the war against Hazael king of Syria in Ramoth-gilead, and the Syrians wounded Joram. 29. And king Joram went back to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramoth, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. And Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah, went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

As among common persons there are some that we call little men that make no figure, are little regarded, and less valued; so among kings, there are some that in comparison with others we may call little kings. This Ahaziah was one of these; he looks mean in the history, and, because wicked, in God's account, vile. It is too plain an evidence of the affinity between Jehoashaphat and Ahab, that they had the same names in their families, at the same time, in which we may suppose, they designed to complement one another. Ahab had two sons, Ahaziah and Jehoram, that reigned successively; Jehoashaphat had a son and grandson named Jehoram and Ahaziah, that in like manner reigned successively. Names indeed do not make natures, but it was an ill omen to Jehoashaphat's family to borrow names from Ahab's; or if he lent the names to that wretched family, he could not communicate with them the devotion of their significations, Ahaziah, *Taking hold of the Lord;* and Jehoram, *The Lord exalted.*

Ahaziah king of Israel had reigned but two years, Ahaziah king of Judah reigned but one: We are here told, that his relation to Ahab's family was the occasion,

1. Of his wickedness, *ver. 27.* *He walked in the way of the house of Ahab,* No. LV.

that idolatrous bloody house; for his mother was Ahab's daughter, *ver. 26.* So that he sucked in wickedness with his milk. *Partus sequitur ventrem.* When men choose wives for themselves, they must remember they are choosing mothers for their children, and are concerned to choose accordingly.

2. Of his fall. Joram, his mother's brother, courted him to join with him for the recovery of Ramoth-gilead, an attempt fatal to Ahab, so it was to Joram his son; for in that expedition he was wounded, *ver. 28.* and returned to Jezreel to be cured, leaving his army there in possession of the place. Ahaziah was likewise returned, but went to Jezreel to see how Jehoram did, *ver. 29.* Providence so ordered it, that he that had been debauched by the house of Ahab, might be cut off with them, when the measure of their iniquity was full, as we shall find in the next chapter. They that partake with sinners in their sin, must expect to partake with them in their plagues.

C H A P. IX.

Hazael and Jehu were the men that were designed to be the instrument of God's Justice in punishing and destroying the house of Ahab: Elijah was bidden to appoint them to this service; but upon Ahab's humiliation, a reprieve was granted, and so it was left to Elisha to acquaint them. Hazael's elevation to the throne of Syria we read of in the foregoing chapter; and we must now attend Jehu to the throne of Israel; for he that escapeth the sword of Hazael, as Joram and Ahaziah did, Jehu must slay, of which this chapter gives us an account. (1.) A commission is sent to Jehu by the hand of one of the prophets, to take upon him the government, and destroy the house of Ahab, ver. 1—10. (2.) Here is his speedy execution of this commission. 1. He communicates it to his captains, ver. 11—15. 2. He marches directly to Jezreel, ver. 16—20. and there dispatcheth, (1.) Joram king of Israel, ver. 20—26. (2.) Ahaziah king of Judah, ver. 27—29. (3.) Jezebel, ver. 30—37.

1. AND Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead. 2. And when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoashaphat, the son of Nimri, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber. 3. Then take the box of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel: then open the door, and flee, and tarry not. 4. ¶ So the young man, even the young man the prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead. 5. And when he came, behold, the captains of the host were sitting: and he said, I have an errand to thee, O captain. And Jehu said, Unto which of all us! And he said, To thee, O captain. 6. And he arose, and went into the house, and he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the LORD, even over Israel. 7. And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel. 8. For the whole house of Ahab shall perish, and I will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel. 9. And I will make the house of Ahab, like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah. 10. And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and there shall be none to bury her. And he opened the door, and fled.

We have here the anointing of Jehu to be king, who was at this time a commander (probably, commander in chief) of the forces employed at Ramoth-gilead, *ver. 14.* There he was fighting for the king his master, but received orders from a higher King to fight against him: It doth not appear that Jehu aimed at the government, or that he ever thought of it, but the commission given him was a perfect surprise to him. Some think he had been anointed before by Elijah, whom God ordained to do it, but privately, and with an intimation that he must not act till farther orders, as Samuel anointed David long before he was to come to the throne: But that is not at all probable, for then we must suppose Elijah had anointed Hazael too. No, when God bid him do these things, he bid him anoint Elisha to be prophet in his room, to do them when he was gone, as God should direct him. Here is,

1. The commission sent. Elisha did not go himself to anoint Jehu, because he was old, and unfit for such a journey, and so well known that he could not do it privately, could not go and come without observation, therefore he sends one of the sons of the prophets to do it, *ver. 1.* They not only revered him as their father, *chap. ii. 11,* but observed and obeyed him as their father. This service of anointing Jehu, 1. Had danger in it, (*1 Sam. xvi. 2.*) and therefore it was not fit Elisha should expose himself, but one of the sons of the prophets, whose life was of less value, and who could do it with less danger. 2. It required labour, and therefore fitter for a young man in his full strength. Let youth work, and age direct. 3. Yet it was an honourable piece of service to anoint a king, and he that did it might hope to be preferred for it afterwards; and therefore, for the encouragement of the young prophets, Elisha employed one of them: he would not ingross all the honours to himself, nor grudge the young prophets a share in them.

When he sent him, (1.) He put the oil into his hand with which he must anoint Jehu, *Take this box of oil.* Solomon was anointed with oil out of the tabernacle, *1 Kings i. 39.* That could not now be had, but oil from a prophet's hand was equivalent to oil out of God's house. It was not the constant practice to anoint kings, but upon the disturbance of the succession, as in the case of Solomon; or the interruption of it, as in the case of Joash, *chap. xi. 12.* or the translation of the government to a new family, as here, and in the case of David; yet it might be used ordinarily, though the

scripture does not mention it. (2.) He put the words into his mouth which he must say, *ver. 3, I have anointed thee king*, and, no doubt, told him all the rest that he said, *ver. 7-10*. Those whom God sends on his errand, shall not go without full instruction.

He also ordered him, 1. To do it privately; to single out Jehu from the rest of the captains, and anoint him *in an inner chamber*, *ver. 2*. that Jehu's confidence in his commission might be tried, when he had no witness to attest it; his being of a sudden spirited for the service, would be proof sufficient of his being anointed to it, there needed no other proof. The thing signified was the best evidence of the sign. 2. To do it expeditiously. When he went about it, he must *gird up his loins*; when he had done it, he must *fly and not tarry* for a fee, or a treat, or to see what Jehu would do. It becomes the sons of the prophets to be quick and lively at their work, to go about it, and go through it, as men that hate sauntering and trifling. They should be as angels that fly swiftly.

2. The commission delivered. The young prophet did his business with dispatch; was at Ramoth-gilead presently, *ver. 4*. There he found the general-officers sitting together, either at dinner, or in a council of war, *ver. 5*. With the assurance that became a messenger from God, notwithstanding the meanness of his appearance, he called Jehu out from the rest, not waiting his leisure, or begging his pardon for disturbing him, but as one having authority, *I have an errand to thee, O Captain*. Perhaps Jehu had some intimation of his business; and therefore that he might not seem too forward to catch at the honour he asked, *To which of all us?* that it might not be said afterwards, he got it by speaking first, but they might all be satisfied he was indeed the person designed.

When the prophet had him alone, he anointed him, *ver. 6*. The anointing of the Spirit is a hidden thing, that new name, which none knows but they that have it. Herewith,

(1.) He invests him in the royal dignity, *Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, whose messenger I am, in his name I have anointed thee king over the people of the Lord*. He gives him an uncontested title, but minds him that he was made king, 1. *By the God of Israel*; from him he must see his power derived, for by him kings reign, for him he must use it, and to him he must be accountable. Magistrates are the ministers of God, and must therefore act in dependence upon him, and with an entire devotedness to him and to his glory. 2. *Over the Israel of God*. Though the people of Israel were wretchedly corrupted, and had forfeited all the honour of relation to God, yet they are here called the *people of the Lord*, for he had a right to them, and had not yet given them a bill of divorce. Jehu must look upon the people he was made king of, as the *people of the Lord*, not as his vassals, but God's freemen, his sons, his first-born, not to be abused or tyrannized over. *God's people*, and therefore to be ruled for him, and according to his laws.

(2.) He instructs him in his present service, which was to destroy all the house of Ahab, *ver. 7*. not that he might clear his own way to the throne, and secure to himself the possession of it, but that he might execute the judgments of God upon that guilty and obnoxious family. He calls Ahab his master, that the relation might be no objection. He was thy master, and to lift up thy hand against his son and successor, would be not only base ingratitude, but treason, rebellion, and all that is naught, if thou hadst not an immediate command from God to do it: but thou art under higher obligations to thy master in heaven, than to thy master Ahab; he has determined, that *the whole house of Ahab shall perish*, and *by thy hand*; fear not, hath not he commanded thee? fear not sin, his command will justify thee and bear thee out: fear not danger, his command will prosper thee and bring thee off.

That he might intelligently, and in a right manner do this great execution on the house of Ahab, he tells him,

1. What was their crime, what the ground of the controversy, and wherefore God had this quarrel with them, that he might have an eye to that which God had an eye to, and that was *the blood of God's servants the prophets*, and other his faithful worshippers, which they had shed, and which must now be required at the hand of Jezebel. That they were idolaters was bad enough, and merited all that was brought upon them; yet that is not mentioned here, but the controversy God has with them, is for their being persecutors: not so much their *throwing down God's altars*, as their *slaying his prophets with the sword*. Nothing fills the measure of the iniquity of any prince or people so as this doth, nor brings a surer and sorer ruin. This was the sin that brought on Jerusalem its first destruction, *2 Chron. xxxvi. 16*. and its final one, *Matt. xxiii. 37, 38*. Jezebel's whoredoms and witchcrafts were not so provoking as her persecuting the prophets, killing some, and driving the rest into corners and caves, *1 Kings xviii. 4*.

2. What was their doom, they were sentenced to utter destruction; not to be corrected, but to be cut off, and rooted out. This Jehu must know, that his eye might not spare for pity, favour, or affection. All that belonged to Ahab must be slain, *ver. 8*. A pattern is given him of the destruction intended, in the destruction of the families of Jeroboam and Baasha, *ver. 9*, and he is particularly directed to throw Jezebel to the dogs, *ver. 10*. The whole flock of royal blood was little enough, and too little, to atone for the blood of the prophets, the saints and martyrs, which in God's account is of great price.

The prophet having done this errand, made the best of his way home again, and left Jehu alone to consider what he had to do, and to beg direction from God.

11. ¶ Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord, and one said unto him, *Is all well?* wherefore came this mad fellow to thee? And he said unto them, *Ye know the man, and his communication*. 12. And they said, *It is false; tell us now*. And he said, *Thus and thus spake he to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel*. 13. Then they hastened, and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, *Jehu is king*. 14. So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi conspired against Joram: (Now Joram had kept Ramoth-gilead, he and all Israel, because of Hazael king of Syria: 15. But king Joram was returned to be healed in Jezreel, of the wounds which the Syrians had given him, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria.) And Jehu said, *If it be your minds, then let none go forth nor escape out of the city, to go to tell it in Jezreel*.

Jehu, after some pause, returned to his place at the board, taking no notice of what had passed, but, as it should seem, designing for the present to keep it to himself, if they had not urged him to discover it: Let us therefore see what passed between him and the captains.

1. With what contempt the captains speak of the young prophet, *ver. 11*. *Wherefore came this mad fellow to thee?* What business has he with thee? And why wouldst thou humour him so far as to retire for conversation with him? Are prophets company for captains? They call him a mad fellow, because he was one of those that would not *run with them to an excess of riot*, *1 Pet. iv. 4*. that lived a life of self-denial, mortification, and contempt of the world, and spent their time in devotion; for these things they thought the prophets were fools, and the *spiritual men were mad*, *Hol. ix. 7*. Note, Those that have no religion, commonly speak with disdain of those that are religious, and look upon them as crack-brained. They said of our Saviour, *he is beside himself*; of John Baptist, *he has a devil*, is a poor melancholy man; of St. Paul, *that much learning had made him mad*: The highest wisdom is thus represented as folly, and those that best understand themselves looked upon as beside themselves. Perhaps Jehu intended it for a rebuke to his friends, when he said, *Ye know the man* to be a prophet, why then do ye call him a mad fellow? Ye know the way of his communication to be not from madness, but inspiration. Or, being a prophet, you may guess what his business is, to tell me of my faults, and to teach me my duty; I need not inform you concerning it. Thus he thought to have put them off, but they urged him to tell them. It is false (say they) we cannot conjecture what was his errand, and therefore tell us. Being thus pressed to it, he told them that the prophet had *anointed him king*, and, it is probable, shewed them the oil upon his head, *ver. 12*. He knew not but some of them, either out of loyalty to Joram, or envy of him, might oppose him, and go near to crush his interest in his infancy; but he relied on the divine appointment, and was not afraid to own it, knowing whom he had trusted: he that raised him would stand by him.

2. With what respect they compliment the new king upon the first notice of his advancement, *ver. 13*. How meanly soever they thought of the prophet that anointed him, and of his office, they expressed a great veneration for the royal dignity of him that was anointed, and were very forward to proclaim him with sound of trumpet: In token of their subjection and allegiance to him, their affection to his person and government, and their desire to see him high and easy in it, they put their garments under him, that he might stand or sit upon them *on the top of the stairs*, in sight of the soldiers, who upon the first intimation came together to grace the solemnity. God put it into their hearts thus readily to own him, for he turns the hearts of people as well as kings, like the rivers of water, into what channel he pleaseth. Perhaps they were disquieted at Joram's government, or had a particular affection for Jehu; however it seems things were ripe for the revolution, and they all came into Jehu's interest, and conspired against Joram, *ver. 14*.

3. With what caution Jehu proceeded. He had advantages against Joram, and he knew how to improve them. He had the army with him: Joram had left it, and was gone home ill wounded. Now in two things Jehu's good conduct appears: 1. That he complimented the captains, and would do nothing without their advice and consent; if it be your minds, we will do so and so, else not; thereby intimating the deference he paid to their judgment, and the confidence he had in their fidelity, both which were very obliging. It is the wisdom of those that would rise fast, and stand firm, to take their friends along with them. 2. That he contrived to surprise Joram; and in order thereto, to come upon him with speed, and to prevent his having notice of what was now done: *Let none go forth to tell it in Jezreel*, that, as a snare, the ruin may come on him and his house. The suddenness of an attack sometimes turns to as good an account as the force of it.

16. So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel, (for Joram lay there) and Ahaziah king of Judah was come down to see Joram. 17. And there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, *I see a company*. And Joram said, *Take an horseman, and send to meet them, and let him say, Is it peace?* 18. So there went one on horseback to meet him, and said, *Thus saith the king, Is it peace?* And Jehu said, *What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me*. And the watchman told, saying, *The messenger came to them, but he cometh not again*. 19. Then he sent out a second on horseback, which came to them, and said, *Thus saith the king, Is it peace?* And Jehu answered, *What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me*. 20. And the watchman told, saying, *He came even unto them, and cometh not again: and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi: for he driveth furiously*. 21. And Joram said, *Make ready*. And his chariot was made ready. And Joram king of Israel, and Ahaziah king of Judah went, out, each in his chariot, and they went out against Jehu, and met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite. 22. And it came to pass when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, *Is it peace, Jehu?* And he answered, *What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?* 23. And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, *There is treachery, O Ahaziah*. 24. And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot. 25. Then said Jehu to Bidkar his captain, *Take up, and cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him*. 26. Surely, I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD, and I will requite thee in this

this plat, saith the LORD. Now therefore take and cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the LORD. 27. ¶ But when Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden-house: and Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot: *And they did so*, at the going up to Gur, which is by Ibleam: and he fled to Megiddo, and died there. 28. And his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his sepulchre with his fathers in the city of David. 29. And in the eleventh year of Joram the son of Ahab, began Ahaziah to reign over Judah.

From Ramoth gilead to Jezreel was more than one day's march; about the mid-way between them the river Jordan must be crossed. We may suppose Jehu to have marched with all possible expedition, and to take the utmost precaution to prevent the tidings from getting to Jezreel before him; and at length we have him within ken first, and then within reach of the devoted king.

1. Joram's watchman discovers him first at a distance, him and his retinue, and gives notice to the king of the approach of a company, whether of friends or foes he cannot tell. But the king (impatient to know what is the matter, and perhaps jealous that the Syrians, who had wounded him, dogged him by the blood to his own palace, and were coming to seize him) sent first one messenger, and then another, to bring him intelligence, *ver. 17-19*. He had scarce recovered the fright he was put into in the battle, and his guilty conscience put him into a continual terror. Each messenger asked the same question, *Is it peace?* Are you for us, or for our adversaries? Do you bring good tidings or bad? And had the same answer, *What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me*, *ver. 18, 19, q. d.* It is not to thee, but to him that sent thee, that I will give answer: for thy part, if thou consult thy own safety, *turn thee behind me*, and list thyself among my followers. The watchman gives notice that the messengers were taken prisoners; and at length observes, that the leader of this troop drove like Jehu, who, it seems, was noted for driving furiously, thereby discovering himself to be a man of a hot eager spirit, intent upon his business, and pushing forward with all his might. A man of such a violent temper was fittest for the service to which Jehu was designed. The wisdom of God is seen in the choice of proper instruments to be employed in his work. But it is not much for any man's reputation to be known by his fury. He that has rule over his own spirit, is better than the mighty. The Chaldee paraphrase gives this a contrary sense: *The leading is like that of Jehu, for he leads quietly*. And it should seem, he did not come up very fast, for then there had not been time for all this that passed. And some think he chose to march slowly, that he might give Joram time to come out to him, and so dispatch him before he entered the city.

2. Joram himself goes out to meet him, and takes Ahaziah king of Judah along with him; neither of them equipped for war, as not expecting an enemy, but in haste to have their curiosity satisfied. How strangely has providence sometimes ordered it, that men have been in haste to meet their ruin, when their day has come to fall.

(1.) The place where Joram met Jehu was ominous, *in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite*, *ver. 21*. The very sight of that ground was enough to make Joram tremble, and Jehu triumph; for Joram had the guilt of Naboth's blood fighting against him, and Jehu had the force of Elijah's curse fighting for him. The circumstances of events are sometimes so ordered by divine providence, as to make the punishment answer the sin, as face answers to face in a glass.

2. Joram's demand was still the same, *It is peace, Jehu?* Is all well? Dost thou come home thus flying from the Syrians, or more than conqueror over them? It seems, he looked for peace, and could not entertain any other thought. Note, It is very common for great sinners, even when they are upon the brink of ruin, to flatter themselves with an opinion that all is well with them, and to cry peace to themselves.

3. Jehu's reply was very startling; he answered him with a question, *What peace canst thou expect, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel (who though queen-dowager was in effect queen-regent) and her witchcrafts are so many?* See how plainly Jehu deals with him: Formerly he durst not do so, but now he had another spirit. Note, Sinners will not always be flattered; one time or other they will have their own given them, *Psal. xxxvi. 2*. Observe, 1. He chargeth upon him his mother's wickedness, because he had at first learned it, and then with his kingly power protected it. She stands impeached for whoredom, corporal and spiritual, serving idols, and serving them with the very acts of lewdness: For witchcraft likewise, enchantments and divinations, used in honour of her idols; and these multiplied, the whoredoms and the witchcrafts many; for those that abandon themselves to wicked courses, know not where they will stop. One sin begets another. 2. Upon that account he throws him off from all pretensions to peace; What peace can come to that house in which there is so much wickedness unrepented of? Note, The way of sin can never be the way of peace, *Isa. lvii. 21*. What peace can sinners have with God, what peace with their own consciences, what good, what comfort can they expect in life, in death, or after death, that go on still in their trespasses? No peace so long as sin is persisted in, but so soon as it is repented of and forsaken, there is peace.

4. The execution was done immediately. When Joram heard of his mother's crimes, his heart failed him, he presently concluded the long-threatened day of reckoning was now come, and cried out, *There is treachery, O Ahaziah*; Jehu is our enemy, and it is time for us to shift for our safety. Both fled. And,

1. Joram, king of Israel, was slain presently, *ver. 24*. Jehu dispatched him with his own hands. The bow was not drawn at a venture, as that which sent the fatal arrow through the joints of his father's harness, but directed the arrow between his shoulders as he fled, (it was one of God's arrows which he has ordained against the persecutor, *Psal. vii. 13*.) and it reached to his heart, so that he died upon the spot. He was now the top branch of Ahab's house, and therefore was first cut off. He died a criminal, under the sentence of the law, which Jehu, the executioner, pursues in the disposal of the dead body. Naboth's vineyard was hard by, which put him in mind of that circumstance of the doom Elijah passed upon Ahab, *I will requite thee in this plat*, said the Lord, (*ver. 25, 26*.) for the blood of Naboth himself, and for the blood of his sons, who were either put to death with him as partners in his crime, or secretly murdered after, lest they should bring an appeal, or find some way to revenge their father's death; or had broke their hearts for the loss of him; or his whole estate being confiscated, as well as his vineyard, had lost their livelihoods, which was in effect to lose their lives: for this the house of Ahab must be reckoned with; and that very piece of ground which he with so much pride and pleasure had made

himself master of, at the expence of the guilt of innocent blood, now became the theatre on which his son's dead body lay exposed a spectacle to the world. Thus the Lord is known by the judgment which he executeth. Haggaion. Selah.

2. Ahaziah king of Judah was pursued, and slain in a little time, and not far off, *ver. 27, 28*. (1.) Though he was now in Joram's company, he had not been slain, but that he was joined with the house of Ahab both in affinity and in iniquity; he was one of them; so he had made himself by his sins, and therefore he must fare as they fare. Jehu justly construed his commission to extend to them. Yet, (2.) Perhaps he had not at this time fallen with them, if he had not been found in company with them. It is a dangerous thing to associate with evil-doers; we may be entangled both in guilt and misery by it.

30. ¶ And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window. 31. And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, *Had Zimri peace*, who slew his master? 32. And he lift up his face to the window, and said, *Who is on my side?* who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs. 33. And he said, *Throw her down*. So they threw her down; and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trod her under foot. 34. And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, *Go, see now this cursed woman, and bury her: for she is a king's daughter*. 35. And they went to bury her; but they found no more of her than the skull, and the feet, and the palms of her hands. 36. Wherefore they came again, and told him: and he said, *This is the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, in the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel*: 37. And the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field, in the portion of Jezreel, so that they shall not say, *This is Jezebel*.

The greatest delinquent in the house of Ahab was Jezebel: it was she that introduced Baal; slew the Lord's prophets; contrived the murder of Naboth; stirred up her husband first, and then her sons to do wickedly; a cursed woman she is here called, *ver. 34*. a curse to the country, and whom all that wished well to their country had a curse for; three reigns her reign had lasted, but now at length her day is come to fall. We read of a false prophetess in the church of Thyatira, that is compared to Jezebel, and called by her name, *Rev. ii. 20*. her wickedness the same, seducing God's servants to idolatry; a long space given her to repent, *ver. 21*. as to Jezebel; and a fearful ruin brought upon her at last, *ver. 22, 23*. as here upon Jezebel. So that Jezebel's destruction may be looked upon as typical of the destruction of idolaters and persecutors, especially that great whore, that mother of harlots, that hath made herself drunk with the blood of saints, and the nations drunk with the wine of her fornications, when God shall put it into the hearts of the kings of the earth to hate her, *Rev. xvii. 5, 6, 16*: Now here we have,

1. Jezebel daring the judgment. She heard that Jehu had slain her son, and slain him for her whoredoms and witchcrafts, and thrown his dead body into the portion of Naboth according to the word of the Lord, and that he was now coming to Jezreel, where she could not but expect herself to fall next a sacrifice to his revenging sword; now see how she meets her fate. She posted herself in a window at the entering of the gate, to affront Jehu, and set him at defiance.

(1.) Instead of hiding herself, as one afraid of divine vengeance, she exposed herself to it, and scorned to flee; mocked at fear, and was not affrighted. See how a heart hardened against God will brave it out to the last, *runs upon him even upon his neck*, *Job xv. 25*. But never did any thus harden their hearts against him and prosper.

(2.) Instead of humbling herself and putting herself into close mourning for her son, she painted her face, and tired her head, that she might appear like herself, that is, (as she thought) great and majestic, hoping thereby to daunt Jehu, to dash him out of countenance, and to stop his career. *The Lord God called to baldness and girding with sackcloth*, but behold painting and dressing, walking contrary to God, *Isa. xxii. 12, 13*. There is not a surer preface of ruin than an unhumiliated heart under humbling providences. Let painted faces look in Jezebel's glass, and see how they like themselves.

(3.) Instead of trembling before Jehu, the instrument of God's vengeance, she thinks to make him tremble with that threatening question, *Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?* Observe, (1.) She took no notice of the hand of God gone out against her family, but slew in the face of him that was only the sword in his hand. We are very apt, when we are in trouble, to break out into a passion against the instruments of our trouble, when we ought to be submissive to God, and angry at ourselves only. (2.) She pleased herself with the thought, that what Jehu was now doing would certainly end in his own ruin, and that he would not have peace in it. He had cut her off from all pretensions to peace, *ver. 22*. and now she thinks to cut him off likewise. Note, It is no new thing for those that are doing God's work to be looked upon as out of the way of peace. Active reformers, faithful reprovers, are threatened with trouble, but let them be in nothing terrified, *Phil. i. 28*. (3.) She quoted a precedent to deter him from the prosecution of this enterprise; *Had Zimri peace?* No, he had not; he came to the throne by blood and treachery, and within seven days was constrained to burn the palace over his head, and himself in it: And canst thou expect to fare any better? Had the case been parallel, it had been proper enough to give him this memorandum: for the judgments of God upon those that have gone before us in any sinful way, should be warning to us take heed of treading in their steps. But the instance of Zimri was misapplied to Jehu: Zimri had no warrant for what he did, but was incited to it purely by his own ambition and cruelty, whereas Jehu was anointed by one of the sons of the prophets, and did this by order from heaven, which would bear him out. In comparing persons and things, we must carefully distinguish between the precious and the vile, and take heed, lest from the fate of sinful men we read the doom of useful men.

2. Jehu demanding aid against her. He looked up to the window, not daunted at the menaces of her impudent but impotent rage, and cried, *Who is on my side?* *who?* *ver. 32*. He was called out to do God's work, in reforming the land, and punishing those that had debauched it; and here he calls out for assistance in the doing of it; looked if there were any to help, any.

any to uphold, *Iſa.* liiii. 5. He liſts up a ſtandard, and makes proclamation, as Moſes, *Exod.* xxxiii. 26. *Who is on the Lord's ſide?* And the pſalmiſt, *Pſal.* xciv. 16. *Who will riſe up for me againſt evil-doers?* Note, When the reformation-work is ſet on foot, it is time to aſk, who ſides with it.

3. Her own attendants delivering her up to his juſt revenge. Two or three chamberlains looked out to Jehu with ſuch a countenance as encouraged him to believe they were on his ſide, and to them he called, not to ſeize or ſecure her till farther orders, but immediately to throw her down, which was one way of ſtoning malefactors, caſting them headlong from ſome ſteep place. Thus was vengeance taken on her for the ſtoning of Naboth: They threw her down, *ver.* 53. If God's command would juſtify Jehu, his command would juſtify them. Perhaps they had a ſecret diſlike of Jezebel's wickedneſs, and hated her though they ſerved her; or it may be ſhe was barbarous and injurious to thoſe about her, and they were pleaſed with this opportunity of being revenged on her; or obſerving Jehu's ſucceſs, they hoped thus to ingratiate themſelves with him, and keep their places in his court. However it was, thus ſhe was moſt ſhamefully put to death, daſhed againſt the wall, and the pavement, and then trodden on by horſes, which were all beſmeared with her blood and brains. See the end of pride and cruelty, and ſay, *The Lord is righteous.*

4. The very dogs completed her ſhame and ruin, according to the prophecy. When Jehu had taken ſome reſreſhment in the palace, he beſought himſelf of ſhewing ſo much reſpect to Jezebel's ſex and quality, as to bury her. As bad as ſhe was, ſhe was a daughter, a king's daughter, a king's wife, a king's mother, *Go, and bury her,* *ver.* 34. But though he had forgot what the prophet ſaid, *ver.* 10. *Dogs ſhall eat Jezebel;* God had not forgot it. While he was eating and drinking, the dogs had devoured her dead body, the dogs that *went about the city,* *Pſal.* lix. 6. and fed upon the carrion, ſo that there was nothing left but her bare ſkull (the painted face was gone) and her feet and hands. The hungry dogs had no reſpect to the dignity of her extraction: A king's daughter was no more to them than a common perſon. When we pamper our bodies, and uſe them deliciously, let us think how vile they are, and that ſhortly they will be either a feaſt for worms under-ground, or beaſts above-ground. When notice was brought of this to Jehu, he remembered the threatening, *1 Kings* xxi. 23. *The dogs ſhall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.* Nothing ſhould remain of her but the monuments of her infamy. She had been uſed to appear on public days in great ſtate; and it was, This is Jezebel: What a port doth ſhe bear! What a figure doth ſhe make! How great ſhe looks! But now it ſhall be ſaid no more. We have often ſeen the wicked buried, *Eccleſ.* viii. 10. yet ſometimes, as here, they have no burial, *Eccleſ.* vi. 3. Jezebel's name no where remained, but ſigmatized in ſacred writ: they could not ſo much as ſay, this is Jezebel's duſt; this is Jezebel's grave; or, this is Jezebel's ſeed. Thus the name of the wicked ſhall rot, rot above-ground.

C H A P. X.

We have in this chapter, 1. A farther account of Jehu's execution of his commiſſion. He cut off, (1.) All Ahab's ſons, ver. 1—10. (2.) All Ahab's kindred, ver. 11, 12, 13, 14, 17. (3.) Ahab's idolatry: his zeal againſt that he took Jehonadab to be witneſs to, ver. 15, 16. ſummoned all the worſhippers of Baal to attend, ver. 18—23. and ſlew them all, ver. 24, 25. and then aboliſhed that idolatry, ver. 26—28. 2. A ſhort account of the adminiſtration of his government. (1.) The old idolatry of Iſrael was retained, the worſhip of the calves, ver. 29—31. (2.) This brought God's judgments upon them by Hazael, with which his reign concludes, ver. 32—36.

1. **A**ND Ahab had ſeventy ſons in Samaria: and Jehu wrote letters, and ſent to Samaria, unto the rulers of Jezreel, to the elders, and to them that brought up Ahab's children, ſaying, 2. Now as ſoon as this letter cometh to you, ſeeing your maſter's ſons are with you, and there are with you chariots of horſes, a fenced city alſo, and armour: 3. Look even out the beſt and meeteſt of your maſter's ſons, and ſet him on his father's throne, and fight for your maſter's houſe. 4. But they were exceedingly afraid, and ſaid, Behold, two kings ſtood not before him: how then ſhall we ſtand? 5. And he that was over the houſe, and he that was over the city, the elders alſo, and the bringers up of the children, ſent to Jehu, ſaying, We are thy ſervants, and will do all that thou ſhalt bid us; we will not make any king: do thou that which is good in thine eyes. 6. Then he wrote a letter the ſecond time to them, ſaying, If ye be mine, and if ye will hearken unto my voice, take ye the heads of the men your maſter's ſons, and come to me to Jezreel by to-morrow this time: (now the king's ſons being ſeventy perſons, were with the great men of the city, which brought them up). 7. And it came to paſs when the letter came to them, that they took the king's ſons, and ſlew ſeventy perſons, and put their heads in baſkets, and ſent them to Jezreel. 8. ¶ And there came a meſſenger, and told him, ſaying, They have brought the heads of the king's ſons. And he ſaid, Lay ye them in two heaps at the entering in of the gate, until the morning. 9. And it came to paſs in the morning, that he went out, and ſtood, and ſaid to all the people, Ye be righteous: behold, I conſpired againſt my maſter, and ſlew him: but who ſlew all theſe? 10. Know now, that there ſhall fall unto the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD ſpoke concerning the houſe of Ahab: for the LORD hath done that which he ſpoke by his ſervant Elijah. 11. So Jehu ſlew all that remained of the houſe of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinſfolks, and his prieſts, until he left him none remaining. 12. ¶ And he aroſe and departed, and came to Samaria. And as he was at the

ſhearing-houſe in the way, 13. Jehu met with the brethren of Ahaziah king of Judah, and ſaid, Who are ye? And they answered, We are the brethren of Ahaziah, and we go down to ſalute the children of the king, and the children of the queen. 14. And he ſaid, Take them alive. And they took them alive, and ſlew them at the pit of the ſhearing-houſe, even two and forty men; neither left he any of them.

We left Jehu in quiet poſſeſſion of Jezreel, triumphing over Joram and Jezebel: and muſt now attend his farther motions. He knew the whole houſe of Ahab muſt be cut off, and therefore proceeds in his bloody work, and doth not do it deceitfully, or by halves, *Jer.* xlviii. 10.

1. He got the heads of all the ſons of Ahab, cut off by their own guardians at Samaria. Seventy ſons (or grandſons) Ahab had; Gideon's number, *Judg.* viii. 30. In ſuch a number that bare his name, his family was likely to be perpetuated, and yet it is extirpated all at once. Such a quiver full of arrows could not protect his houſe from divine vengeance. Numerous families, if vicious, muſt not expect to be prosperous long. Theſe ſons of Ahab were now at Samaria, a ſtrong city, perhaps brought thither upon occasion of the war with Syria, as a place of ſafety, or upon notice of Jehu's inſurrection; with them were the rulers of Jezreel, i. e. the great officers of the court, who went to Samaria to ſecure themſelves, or to conſult what was to be done. Thoſe of them that were yet under tuition, had their tutors with them, who were intruſted with their education in learning, agreeable to their birth and quality, but it is to be feared, brought them up in the idolatries of their father's houſe, and made them all worſhippers of Baal. Jehu did not think fit to bring his forces to Samaria to deſtroy them, but, that the hand of God might appear the more remarkable in it, made their guardians their murderers.

(1.) He ſent a challenge to their friends to ſtand by them, *ver.* 2, 3. You that are hearty well-wiſhers to the houſe of Ahab, and entire in its intereſts, now is your time to appear for it: Samaria is a ſtrong city, you are in poſſeſſion of it, you have forces at command, you may chooſe out the likeliſt perſon of all the royal family to head you, you know you are not tied to the eldeſt, unleſs he be the beſt and meeteſt of your maſter's ſons: If you have any ſpirit in you, ſhew it, and ſet one of them on his father's throne, and ſtand by him with your lives and fortunes. Not that he deſired they ſhould do this, or expected they would, but thus he upbraided them with their cowardice, and utter inability to conſeſt with the divine counſels. Do if you dare, and ſee what will come of it. Thoſe that have forſaken their religion, have often with it loſt both their ſenſes and their courage, and deſerve to be upbraided with it.

2. Hereby he gained from them a ſubmiſſion. They prudently reaſoned with themſelves, Behold, two kings ſtood not before him, but fell as ſacrifices to his rage, how then ſhall we ſtand? *ver.* 4. therefore they ſent him a ſurrender of themſelves, We are thy ſervants, thy ſubjects, and will do all that thou ſhalt bid us, right or wrong, and will ſet up nobody in competition with thee. They ſaw it was to no purpoſe to contend with him, and therefore it was their intereſt to truckle to him. With much more reaſon may we thus argue ourſelves into a ſubjection to the great God. Many kings and great men have fallen before his wrath, for their wickedneſs, and how then ſhall we ſtand? Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we ſtronger than he? No, we muſt either bend or break.

3. This is improved ſo far as to make them the executioners of thoſe whom they had the tuition of, *ver.* 6. If ye be mine, bring me the heads of your maſter's ſons by to-morrow at this time. Though he knew it muſt be done, and was loth to do it himſelf, one would think he could not expect they ſhould do it. Could they betray ſuch a truſt? Could they be cruel to their maſter's ſons? It ſeems, ſo low did they ſcoop in their adorations of the riſing ſun, that they did it; they cut off the heads of thoſe ſeventy princes, and ſet them in baſkets a preſent to Jehu, *ver.* 7. Learn hence not to truſt in a friend, nor put confidence in a guide not governed by conſcience. One can ſcarce expect that he who has been falſe to his God, ſhould ever be faithful to his prince. But obſerve God's righteouſneſs in their unrighteouſneſs: Theſe elders of Jezreel had been wickedly obſequious to Jezebel's order for the murder of Naboth, *1 Kings* xxi. 11. She gloried, it is likely, in the power ſhe had over them; and now the ſame baſe ſpirit makes them as pliable to Jehu, and as ready to obey his orders for the murder of Ahab's ſons. Let none aim at an arbitrary power, leſt they be found rolling a ſtone which ſome time or other will return upon them. Princes that make their people ſlaves, take the readieſt way to make them rebels; and by forcing men's conſciences, as Jezebel did, they loſe their hold of them.

4. When the ſeparated heads were preſented to him, he ſilly upbraided them that they were the executioners, yet owned the hand of God in it. (1.) He ſeems to blame thoſe that had been the executioners of this vengeance. The heads were laid in two heaps, at the gate, the proper place of judgment. There he acquitted the people before God and the world, *ver.* 9. *Ye be righteous;* and by what the rulers of Samaria had now done, comparatively acquitted himſelf: I ſlew but one, they have ſlain all theſe: I did it by conſpiracy, and with a deſign, they have done this purely in compliance, and with an implicit obedience. Let not the people of Samaria, nor any of the friends of the houſe of Ahab, ever reproach me for what I have done, when their own elders, and very guardians of the orphans, have done this. It is common for thoſe who have done ſomething ill, to endeavour the mitigation of their own reproach, by drawing others in to do ſomething worſe. But, (1.) He reſolves all into the righteous judgment of God, *ver.* 10. *The Lord hath done that which he ſpoke by Elijah.* God is not the author of any man's ſin, but even by that which men do from ill principles, God ſerves his own purpoſes, and glorifies his own name; and is righteous in that wherein men are unrighteous. When the Aſſyrian is made the rod of God's anger, and the inſtrument of his juſtice, he meaneth not ſo, neither doth his heart think ſo. *Iſa.* x. 7.

5. He proceeded to deſtroy all that remained of the houſe of Ahab, not only thoſe that deſcended from him, but thoſe that were in any relation to him, all the officers of his houſhold, miniſters of ſtate, and thoſe in command under him, called here his great men, *ver.* 11. all his kinſfolks and acquaintance, who had been partners with him in his wickedneſs, and his prieſts, or domeſtic chaplains, whom he employed in his idolatrous ſervices, and who ſtrengthened his hand, that he ſhould not turn from his evil way. Having done this in Jezreel, he did the ſame in Samaria, *ver.* 17. *ſlew all that remained to Ahab in Samaria.* This was bloody work, and is not now in any caſe to be drawn into a precedent. Let the guilty ſuffer, but not the guiltleſs for their ſakes. Perhaps ſuch terrible deſtructions as theſe, were intended as types of final deſtruction of all the ungodly. God has a ſword, bathed in heaven, which will come down upon the people of his curſe, and be filled with blood, *Iſa.* xxxv. 5, 6. Then his eyes will not ſpare, neither will he pity.

6. Providence bringing the brethren of Ahaziah in his way, as he was going

going on with this execution, he slew them likewise, *ver. 12, 13, 14.* The brethren of Ahaziah were slain by the Arabians, *2 Chron. xxii. 1.* but these were the sons of his brethren, as it is there explained, *ver. 3.* and they are said to be princes of Judah, and so minister to Ahaziah. Several things concurring to make them obnoxious to the vengeance Jehu was now executing. (1.) They were branches of Ahab's house, being descended from Athaliah, and therefore fell within his commission. (2.) They were tainted with the wickedness of the house of Ahab. (3.) They were now going to make their court to the princes of the house of Ahab, to salute the children of the king and the queen, Joram and Jezebel, which shewed they were linked to them in affection as well as in affinity. These princes, forty-two in number, being appointed as sheep for the sacrifice, were slain with solemnity, at the pit of the shearing-house. The Lord is known by these judgments which he executeth.

15. ¶ And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, coming to meet him; and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand: and he gave him his hand, and he took him up to him into the chariot. 16. And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD: So they made him ride in his chariot. 17. And when he came to Samaria, he slew all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the LORD, which he spake to Elijah. 18. ¶ And Jehu gathered all the people together, and said unto them, Ahab served Baal a little, but Jehu shall serve him much. 19. Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests; let none be wanting: for I have a great sacrifice to do to Baal; whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live. But Jehu did it in subtilty, to the intent that he might destroy the worshippers of Baal. 20. And Jehu said, Proclaim a solemn assembly, for Baal. And they proclaimed it. 21. And Jehu sent through all Israel, and all the worshippers of Baal came, so that there was not a man that came not: and they came into the house of Baal, and the house of Baal was full from one end to another. 22. And he said unto him that was over the vestry, Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal. And he brought them forth vestments. 23. And Jehu went, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab, into the house of Baal, and said unto the worshippers of Baal, Search, and look that there be here with you none of the servants of the LORD, but the worshippers of Baal only. 24. And when they went in to offer sacrifice and burnt-offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men without, and said, If any of the men whom I have brought into your hands, escape, he that letteth him go, his life shall be for the life of him: 25. And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt-offerings, that Jehu said to the guard, and to the captains, Go in, and slay them, let none come forth. And they smote them with the edge of the sword, and the guard and the captains cast them out, and went to the city of the house of Baal. 26. And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burnt them. 27. And they brake down the image of Baal, and brake down the house of Baal, and made it a draught-house unto this day. 28. Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.

Jehu pushing on his work, is here,

1. Courting the friendship of a good man, *Jehonadab the son of Rechab, ver. 15, 16.* This Jehonadab, though mortified to the world, and meddling little with the business of it, (as appears by his charge to his posterity, which they religiously observed three hundred years after, not to drink wine, nor dwell in cities, *Jer. xxxv. 6, &c.*) yet upon this occasion he went to meet Jehu, that he might encourage him in the work to which God had called him. The countenance of good men is a thing which great men, if they be wise, will value, and value themselves by. David prayed, *Let those that fear thee turn to me, Psal. cxix. 79.* This Jehonadab, though no prophet, priest, or Levite, no prince or ruler; yet we may suppose was very eminent for prudence and piety, and generally respected for that life of self-denial and devotion which he lived: Jehu, though a soldier knew him, and honoured him. He did not indeed think of sending for him, but when he met him, (though, it is likely, he drove now as furiously as ever, yet) he stooped to speak to him; and we are here told what passed between them.

1. Jehu saluted him; he blessed him, for the word is; paid him the respect, and shewed him the good-will that was owing to so great an example of serious godliness.

2. Jehonadab assured him that he was sincere in his interest, and a hearty well-wisher to his cause. Jehu professed that his heart was right with him, that he had a true affection for his person, and a veneration for the crown of his nazarethship, and desired to know whether he had the same affection for him, and satisfaction in the crown of royal dignity which God had put upon his head, *Is thine heart right?* A question we should often put to ourselves: I make a plausible profession, have gained a reputation among men, but, *Is my heart right?* Am I sincere and inward with God? Jehonadab gave him his word, It is, and gave him his hand as a pledge of his heart, yield to him, (so giving the hand is rendered, *2 Chron. xxx. 8.*) concurred and covenanted with him, and owned him in the work both of revenge and reformation he was now about.

3. Jehu took him up into his chariot, and took him along with him to Samaria. He put some honour upon him, by taking him into the chariot with him; Jehonadab did not use to be coached, much less with a king: But he received more honour from him, and from the countenance he gave to

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his present work. All sober people would think the better of Jehu, when they saw Jehonadab in the chariot with him. This was not the only time that the piety of some has been made to serve the policy of others; and that designing men have strengthened themselves by drawing good men into their interests. Jehonadab was a stranger to the arts of fleshly wisdom, and has his conversation in simplicity and godly sincerity; and therefore if Jehu be a servant of God, and an enemy to Baal, he will be his faithful friend. Come then, (saith Jehu) come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord; and then thou wilt see reason to espouse my cause. This is commonly taken as not well said by Jehu, and giving cause to suspect that his heart was not right with God in what he did, and that the zeal he pretended for the Lord, was really zeal for himself and his own advancement. For, (1.) He boasted of it, and spoke as if God and man were mightily indebted to him for it. (2.) He desired it might be seen, and taken notice of, like the Pharisee, who did all to be seen of men. An upright heart approves itself to God, and covets no more than his acceptance. If we aim at the applause of men, and make their praise our highest end, we are upon a false bottom. Whether Jehu looked any farther, we cannot judge; however Jehonadab went with him, and, it is likely animated and assisted him in the farther execution of his commission, *ver. 17.* destroying all Ahab's friends in Samaria. A man may hate cruelty, and yet love justice: may be far from thirsting after blood, and yet way wash his feet in the blood of the wicked, *Psal. lvi. 10.*

2. Contriving the destruction of all the worshippers of Baal. The service of Baal was the crying sin of the house of Ahab: that root of this idolatry was plucked up, but multitudes yet remained that were infected with it, and would be in danger to infect others. The law of God was express, that they were to be put to death; but they were so numerous, and so dispersed throughout all parts of the kingdom, and perhaps so alarmed with Jehu's beginnings, that it would be a hard matter to find them all out, and an endless task to prosecute and execute them one by one; Jehu's project therefore is to cut them all off together.

1. By a wile, by a fraud, he brings them together to the temple of Baal. He pretended he would worship Baal more than Ahab had ever done, *ver. 18.* Perhaps he spoke this ironically, or to try the body of the people, whether they would oppose such a resolution as this, and would resent his threatening to increase his predecessors idolatries, as they did Rehoboam's threatening to increase his predecessors exactions, and say, if it be so, we have no part in Jehu, nor inheritance in the son of Nimshi, but it rather seems to have been spoken purposely to deceive the worshippers of Baal, and then it cannot be justified. The truth of God needs not any man's lie. He issued out a proclamation, requiring the attendance of all the worshippers of Baal, to join with him in a sacrifice to Baal, *ver. 19, 20.* not only the prophets and priests, but all throughout the kingdom that worshipped Baal, who were nothing so many as they had been in Elijah's time. Jehu's friends, we may suppose, were aware of what he designed, and were not offended at it: but the bigotted besotted Baalites began to think themselves very happy, and that now they should see golden days again. Joram had put away the image of Baal, chap. 2. if Jehu will restore it, they have what they would have, and come up to Samaria with joy from all parts to celebrate the solemnity; and were pleased to see the house of Baal crowded, *ver. 21.* to see his priests in their vestments, *ver. 22.* and themselves perhaps with some badge or other to notify their relation to Baal, for there were vestments for all his worshippers.

2. He takes care that none of the servants of the Lord should be among them, *ver. 23.* This they took as a provision to preserve the worship of Baal from being profaned by strangers: but it was a wonder they did not by this see themselves brought into a snare, and discern a design upon them. They that suffer themselves to be deceived by Baal, (as all idolaters were by their idols) no marvel if they were deceived by Jehu to their destruction.

3. He gives orders for the cutting of them all off, and Jehonadab joined with him therein, *ver. 23.* When a strict search was made, that none of the servants of God were either for company or curiosity got among them, that there was no wheat among those tares; and eighty men were set to stand guard at all the avenues to Baal's temple, that none might escape, *ver. 24.* the guards were sent in to put them all to the sword, and to mingle their blood with their sacrifices, in a way of just revenge, as they themselves had sometimes done, when in their blind devotion they cut themselves with knives and lances till the blood gushed out, *1 Kings xviii. 28.* This was accordingly done, and the doing of it, though seemingly barbarous, yet considering the nature of their crime, it was really righteous; *The Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God.*

4. The idolaters being thus destroyed, the idolatry itself is utterly abolished. The buildings about the house of Baal (which were so many, and so stately, that they are here called a city) where Baal's priests and their families lived, were destroyed: all the little images, statues, pictures or shrines, which beautified Baal's temple, with the great image of Baal himself, were brought out and burnt, *ver. 26, 27.* and the temple of Baal broken down, and made a dunghill, the common sink or shore of the city, that the remembrance of it might be blotted out, or made infamous. Thus was the worship of Baal quite destroyed, at least for the present, out of Israel, though it had once prevailed so far, that there were but seven thousand of all the thousand of Israel, that had not bowed the knee to Baal, and those incognito. Thus will God destroy all the gods of the heathen, and sooner or later triumph over them all.

29. ¶ Howbeit, from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, to wit, the golden calves that were in Beth-el, and that were in Dan. 30. And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab, according to all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel. 31. But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin. 32. ¶ In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel: 33. From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer (which is by the river Arnon) even Gilead and Bashan. 34. Now the rest of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did, and all his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles

nicles of the kings of Israel? 35. And Jehu slept with his fathers: and they buried him in Samaria, and Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead. 36. And the time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty and eight years.

Here is all the account of the reign of Jehu, though it continued twenty-eight years. The progress of it answered not the glory of its beginning. We have here,

1. God's approbation of what Jehu had done. Many, it is probable, censured him as treacherous and barbarous, called him a rebel, a usurper, a murderer, and prognosticated ill concerning him, that a family thus raised would soon be ruined; but God said, well done, (*ver. 30.*) and then the matter was not great who said otherwise. (1.) God pronounced that to be right which he had done. It is justifiably questionable, whether he did it from a good principle, and whether he did not take some false steps in doing of it; and yet (*saith God*) *Thou hast done well in the executing of that which is right in mine eyes.* The extirpating of idolaters and idolatry was a thing right in God's eyes, for it is an iniquity he visits as surely and severely as any other: It was according to all that was in his heart, all he desired, all he designed; Jehu went through with his word. (2.) God promised him a reward, That his children of the fourth generation from him should sit upon the throne of Israel. This was more than in any of the dignities or royal families of that kingdom; of the house of Ahab there were indeed four kings, Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, and Joram, but the two last were brothers, so that it reached but to the third generation, and that whole family continued but about forty-five years in all, whereas Jehu's continued four, besides himself, and in all about a hundred and twenty years. Note, No services done for God shall go unrewarded.

2. Jehu's carelessness in what he was farther to do. By this it appeared his heart was not right with God, that he was partial in his reformation. (1.) He did not put away all the evil. He departed from the sins of Ahab, but not from the sins of Jeroboam, discarded Baal, but adhered to the calves. The worship of Baal was the greater evil, and more heinous in the sight of God, but the worship of the calves was a great evil, and true conversion is not only from gross sin, but from all sin; not only from false gods, but from false worship. The worship of Baal weakened and diminished Israel, and made them beholden to the Sidonians, and therefore he could easily part with that: but the worship of the calves was a public idolatry, was begun and kept up for reasons of state, to prevent the return of the ten tribes to the house of David, and therefore Jehu clave to that. True conversion is not only from wasteful sins; but from gainful sins; not only from those sins, that are destructive to the secular interest, but from those that support and befriend it; in forsaking which is the great trial, whether we can deny ourselves, and trust God. (2.) He put away evil, but he did not mind that which was good, *ver. 31.* *He took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel.* He abolished the worship of Baal, but did not keep up the worship of God, nor walk in his law. He had shewed great care and zeal for the rooting out of a false religion, but in true religion, 1. He shewed no care, took no heed, lived at large, was not at all solicitous to please God, and do his duty; took no heed to the scriptures, to the prophets, to his own conscience, but walked at all adventures. Those that are heedless, it is to be feared, they are graceless; for where there is a good principle in the heart, it will make men cautious and circumspect, desirous to please God, and jealous of doing any thing to offend him. 2. He shewed no zeal; what he did in religion, he did not do it with his heart, with all his heart, but did it as if he did it not, without any liveliness or concern. It seems, he was a man that had little religion himself, and yet God made use of him as an instrument of reformation in Israel. It is a pity but those that do good to others, should always be good themselves.

3. The judgment that came upon Israel in his reign. We have reason to fear, that when Jehu took no heed himself to walk in God's law, the people were generally as careless as he, both in their devotions, and in their conversations. There was a general decay of piety, and increase of profaneness, and therefore it is not strange that the next news we hear is, *In those days the Lord began to cut Israel short*, *ver. 32.* Their neighbours encroached upon them on every side; they were short in their duty to God, and therefore God cut them short in their extent, wealth, and power. Hazael king of Syria was, above any other, vexatious and mischievous to them, *smote them in all the coasts of Israel*, particularly the countries on the other side Jordan, which lay next him, and most exposed; on these he made continual inroads, and laid them waste. Now the Reubenites and Gadites smarted for the choice which their ancestors made of an inheritance on that side Jordan, which Moses reproved them for, *Numb. xxxii.* How Hazael did what Elisha foresaw he would do, and foretold; But for doing it God had a quarrel with him, and with his kingdom, as we may find, *Amos i. 3. 4.* Because they of Damascus have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron, therefore (*said God*) *I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad.*

Lastly, The conclusion of Jehu's reign, *ver. 34—36.* Notice is taken in general of his might, but because he took no heed to serve God, the memorials of his mighty enterprises and achievements are justly buried in oblivion.

C H A P. XI.

The revolution in the kingdom of Israel was soon perfected in Jehu's settlement; we must now enquire into the affairs of the kingdom of Judah, which lost its head (such as it was) at the same time, and by the same hand as Israel did; but things continued longer there in destruction than in Israel, yet after some years were brought into a good posture, as we find in this chapter. Athaliah usurps the government, and destroys all the seed royal, ver. 1. 2. Joash, a child of a year old, is wonderfully preserved, ver. 2, 3. 3. At six years end he is produced, and by the agency of Jehoiada made king, ver. 4—12. 4. Athaliah is slain, ver. 13—16. 5. Both the civil and religious interests of the kingdom are well settled in the hands of Joash, ver. 7—21. And thus, after some interruption, things returned with advantage into the old channel.

1. **A**ND when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose, and destroyed all the seed royal. 2. But Jehoshaba the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons

which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bed-chamber from Athaliah, so that he was not slain. 3. And he was with her in the house of the LORD, six years: and Athaliah did reign over the land.

God had assured David of the continuance of his family, which is called his *ordaining a lamp for his anointed*: And this cannot but appear a great thing, now we have read of the utter extirpation of so many royal families, one after another. Now here we have David's promised lamp almost extinguished, and yet wonderfully preserved.

1. It was almost extinguished by the barbarous malice of Athaliah, the queen-mother, who, when she heard that her son Ahaziah was slain by Jehu, *arose and destroyed all the seed royal*, *ver. 1.* all that she knew to be a-kin to the crown. Her husband Jehoram had slain all his brethren the sons of Jehoshaphat, *2 Chron. xxii. 8.* and Ahaziah himself. Sure never was royal blood so profusely shed: happy the man that live below envy and emulation! But, as if all this were but a small matter, Athaliah destroys all that were left of the seed royal: it was strange, that one of the tender sex could be so barbarous, that one who had been herself a king's daughter, a king's wife, and a king's mother, could be so barbarous to a royal family, and a family into which she herself was ingrafted; but she did it, (1.) From a spirit of ambition, she thirsted after rule, and thought she could not get to it any other way; that none might reign with her, she slew even the infants and sucklings that might have reigned after her; for fear of a competitor, not any must be reserved for a successor; and, (2.) From a spirit of revenge and rage against God: the house of Ahab being utterly destroyed, and her son Ahaziah among the rest, because he was a-kin to it; she resolved, as it were by way of reprisal, to destroy the house of David, and cut off his line, in defiance of God's promise to perpetuate it: a foolish attempt and fruitless, for who can disannul what God had purposed? Grandmothers have been thought more fond of their grand-children than they were of their own, yet Ahaziah's own mother is the wilful murderer of Ahaziah's own sons, and in their infancy too, when she was obliged, above any other to nurse them and take care of them; well might she be called Athaliah *that wicked woman*, *2 Chron. xxiv. 7.* Jezebel's own daughter; yet herein God was righteous, and visited the iniquity of Joram and Ahaziah, those degenerate branches of David's house upon their children.

2. It was wonderfully preserved by the pious care of one of Joram's daughters, that was wife to Jehoiada the priest who stole away one of the king's sons Joash by name, and hid him, *ver. 2, 3.* This was a brand plucked out of the fire; what number were slain we are not told, but it seems this being a child in the nurse's arms was not missed, or not enquired after, or however not found; the person that delivered him was his own aunt, the daughter of wicked Joram; for those whom God will have protected, he will raise up protectors; the place of his safety was the house of the Lord, one of the chambers belonging to the temple, a place Athaliah seldom troubled; his aunt by bringing him thither, put him under God's special protection, and so hid him by faith, as Moses was hid; now were David's words made good to one of his seed, *Psal. xxvii. 5.* *In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.* With good reason did this Joash, when he grew up, set himself to repair the house of the Lord, for it had been a sanctuary to him; now was the promise made to David bound up in one life, and yet it did not fail. Thus to the son of David will God according to his promise, secure a spiritual seed, which, though sometimes reduced to a small number, brought very low, and seemingly lost, will be perpetuated to the end of time, hid sometimes and unseen, but hid in God's pavilion and unhurt. It was a special providence that Joram, though a king, a wicked king, married his daughter to Jehoiada a priest, a godly priest; some perhaps thought it a disparagement to the royal family to marry a daughter to a clergyman, but it proved a happy marriage, and the saving of the royal family from ruin, for Jehoiada's interest in the temple gave her an opportunity to preserve the child, and hers in the royal family gave him an opportunity to set him on the throne; see the reaches of providence, and how it prepares for what it designs, and what blessings they lay up in store for their families, that marry their children to those that are wise and good.

4. And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains, and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the LORD, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the LORD, and shewed them the king's son. 5. And he commanded them, saying, This is the thing that ye shall do; a third part of you that enter it on the sabbath, shall even be keepers of the watch of the king's house: 6. And a third part shall be at the gate of Sur: and a third part at the gate behind the guard: so shall ye keep the watch of the house, that it be not broken down. 7. And two parts of all you, that go forth on the sabbath, even they shall keep the watch of the house of the LORD about the king. 8. And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand: and he that cometh within the ranges, let him be slain: and he ye with the king, as he goeth out, and as he cometh in. 9. And the captains over the hundreds did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest commanded: and they took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that should go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest. 10. And to the captains over hundreds did the priests give king David's spears and shields that were in the temple of the LORD. 11. And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, round about the king, from the right corner of the temple, to the left corner of the temple, along by the altar and the temple. 12. And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony, and they made him king, and anointed him, and they clapt their hands, and said, God save the king.

Six years Athaliah tyrannized; we have not a particular account of her reign, no doubt, it was of a piece with the beginning; while Jehu was extirpating the worship of Baal in Israel, she was establishing it in Judah, as appears, 2 Chron. xxiv. 7. The court and kingdom of Judah had been debauched by their alliance with the house of Ahab, and now one of that house is a curse and a plague to both, sinful friendships speed no better; all this while Joash lay hid, entitled to a crown, and intended for it, and yet buried alive in obscurity; though the sons and heirs of heaven are now hid, *the world knows them not*, 1 John iii. 1. but the time is fixed when they shall appear in glory, as Joash in his seventh year, by that time he was ready to be shewed, not a babe, but having served his first apprenticeship to life, and being arrived to his first climacterical year, had taken a good step towards manhood; by that time the people were grown weary of Athaliah's tyranny, and ripe for a revolution; how that revolution was effected we are told,

1. The manager of this great affair was Jehoiada the priest, probably the high-priest, or at least the Sagan, (as the Jews called him) or suffragan to the high-priest; by his birth and office he was a man in authority, whom the people are bound by the law to observe and obey, especially when there was no rightful king upon the throne, Deut. xvii. 12. By marriage he was allied to the royal family, and if all the seed royal were destroyed, his wife, as daughter to Joram, had a better title to the crown than Athaliah had; by his eminent gifts and graces he was fitted to serve his country, and better service he could not do it, than to free it from Athaliah's usurpation; and we have reason to think he did not make this attempt, till he had first asked counsel of God, and known his mind, either by prophets, or Urim, or both.

2. The management was very discreet, and as became so wise and good a man as Jehoiada was.

(1.) He concerted the matter with the rulers of hundreds and the captains, the men in office, ecclesiastical, civil and military, got them to him to the temple, consulted with them, laid before them the grievances they at present laboured under, gave them an oath of secrecy, and finding them free and forward to join with him, he shewed them the king's son, ver. 4. and so well satisfied were they with his fidelity, that they saw no reason to suspect a sham; we may well think what a pleasing surprise it was to the good people among them, who feared the house lineage of David was quite cut off, to find such a spark as this in the embers.

(2.) He posted the priests and Levites, who were more immediately under his direction, in the several avenues to the temple, to keep the guards, putting them under the command of the rulers of hundreds, ver. 9. David had divided the priests into courses, which waited by turns, every sabbath-day morning a new company came into waiting, but the company of the foregoing week did not go out of waiting till the sabbath evening, so that on the sabbath-day, when double service was to be done, there was a double number to do it, both they that were to come in, and they that were to go out; these Jehoiada employed to attend on this great occasion, he armed them out of the magazines of the temple with David's spears and shields, either his own or those he had taken from his enemies, which he devoted to God's honour, ver. 10. If they were old and unfashionable, yet they that used them might by their being David's be minded of God's covenant with him, which they were now acting in the defence of.

Two things they were ordered to do. 1. To protect the young king from being insulted, they must keep watch of the king's house, ver. 5. *compass the king, and be with him*, ver. 6. to guard him from Athaliah's partizans, for still there were those that thirsted after royal blood. 2. To preserve the holy temple from being profaned by the concourse of people that would come together on this occasion, ver. 5. *Keep the watch of the house, that it be not either broken through or broken down*, and so strangers should crowd in, or such as were unclean; he was not so zealous for the projected revolution as to forget his religion; in time of the greatest hurry, care must be taken that the holy things of God be not intrenched upon, *Ne detrimentum capiat ecclesia*. It is observable, that Jehoiada appointed to each his place as well as his work, ver. 6, 7. for good order contributes very much to the expediting and accomplishing any great enterprise; let every man know, and keep, and make good his post, and then the work will be done suddenly.

3. When the guards were fixed, then the king was brought forth, ver. 12. *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion*, for even in thy holy mountain thy king appears, a child indeed, but not such a one as brings woe upon the land, for he was the son of nobles, the son of David, Eccles. x. 17. A child indeed, but he had a good guardian, and, which was better, a good God to go to; Jehoiada, without delay, proceeded to the coronation of this young king, for though he was not yet capable of dispatching business, he would be growing upwards to it by degrees, this was done with great solemnity, ver. 12. 1. In token of his being invested with a kingly power, he put the crown upon him, though it was yet too big and too heavy for his head; the regalia, it is probable, were kept in the temple, and so the crown was ready at hand. 2. In token of his obligation to govern by law, and to make the word of God his rule, he gave him the testimony, put a Bible into his hand, which he must read in all the days of his life, Deut. xvii. 18, 19. In token of his receiving the spirit, to qualify him for this great work to which he was called, he anointed him; though notice is taken of the anointing of their kings only in case of interruption, as here, and in Solomon's case, yet I know not but the ceremony might be used to all their kings, at least those of the house of David, because their royalty was typical of Christ's, who was to be anointed above his fellows, above all the sons of David. 4. In token of the peoples acceptance of him, and subjection to his government, they clapt their hands for joy, and expressed their hearty good wishes to him, *Let the king live*, and thus they made him king, made him their king, consented and concurred with the divine appointment: they had reason to rejoice in the period now put to Athaliah's tyranny, and the prospect they had of the restoration and establishment of religion, by a king under the tuition of so good a man as Jehoiada: they had reason to bid him welcome to the crown whose right it was, and to pray let him live, who came to them as life from the dead, and in whom the house of David was to live; with such acclamations of joy and satisfaction must the kingdom of Christ be welcomed into our hearts when his throne is set up here, and Satan the usurper is deposed; *Hosanna, blessed is he that comes: clap hands and say, Let king Jesus live, for ever live and reign in my soul, and in all the world; it is promised, Psal. lxxii. 15. He shall live, and prayer shall be made for him, and his kingdom, continually.*

13. ¶ And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard, and of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the LORD. 14. And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner was, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets: and Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason, treason. 15. But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the

host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges; and him that followeth her, kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the LORD. 16. And they laid hands on her; and she went by the way by the which the horses came into the king's house, and there was she slain.

We may suppose it was designed when they had finished the solemnity of the king's inauguration, to make a visit to Athaliah, and call her to an account for her murders, usurpation and tyranny; but, like her mother Jezebel, she saved them the labour, went out to meet them, and hastened her own destruction.

1. Hearing the noise, she came in a fright to see what was the matter, ver. 13. Jehoiada and his friends began in silence, but now they found their strength they proclaimed what they were doing; it seems, Athaliah was ill beloved, else she had had intelligence brought her of this daring attempt before with her own ears she heard the noise; had the design been discovered before it was perfected, it might have been quashed, but now it was too late; when she heard the noise, it was strange she was so ill advised as to come herself, and, for ought appears, to come alone; sure she was not so ill-befriended as to have none to go for her, or none to go with her, but she was wretchedly mis-served by the transport both of fear and indignation she was in: whom God will destroy, he befools.

2. Seeing what was done she cried out for help, she saw the king's place by the pillar possessed by one to whom the princes and people did homage, ver. 14. and had reason to conclude her power at an end, which she knew was usurped, this made her rent her clothes, like one distracted, and cry, Treason, treason, come help against the traitors; Josephus adds, that she cried to have him killed that possessed the king's place; what was now in doing was the highest justice, yet it is branded as the highest crime, she herself was the greatest traitor, and yet is first and loudest in crying treason, treason; those that are themselves most guilty, are commonly most forward to reproach others.

3. Jehoiada gave orders to put her to death, as an idolater, an usurper, and an enemy to the public peace; care was taken, 1. That she should not be killed in the temple, or any of the courts of it, in reference to that holy place, which must not be stained with the blood of any human sacrifice, though never so justly offered. 2. That whoever appeared for her should die with her, him that follows her, to protect or rescue her, any of her attendants that resolve to adhere to her, and will not come into the interests of their rightful sovereign, *kill with the sword*, but not unless they follow her now, ver. 15. According to these orders, she endeavouring to make her escape the back way to the palace, through the stalls, they pursued her, and there killed her, ver. 16. *So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: Thus give the bloody whore blood to drink, for she is worthy.*

17. ¶ And Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD, and the king and the people, that they should be the LORD's people; between the king also and the people. 18. And all the people of the land went into the house of Baal, and brake it down, his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars: and the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD. 19. And he took the rulers over hundreds, and the captains, and the guard, and all the people of the land, and they brought down the king from the house of the LORD, and came by the way of the gate of the guard to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings. 20. And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was in quiet; and they slew Athaliah with the sword beside the king's house. 21. Seven years old was Jehoash when he began to reign.

Jehoiada has now got over the hardest part of his work, when by the death of Athaliah, his young prince had his way to the throne cleared of all opposition, he is now to improve his advantage for the perfecting of the revolution, and to the settling of the government.

Two things we have an account of here,

1. The good foundations he laid by an original contract, ver. 17. Now prince and people were together in God's house, as it would seem, before they stirred, he took care they should jointly covenant with God, and mutually covenant with each other, that they might rightly understand their duty both to God and to one another, and be firmly bound to it.

(1.) He endeavoured to settle and secure the interests of religion among them, by a covenant between them and God. King and people would then cleave most firmly to each other, when both had joined themselves to the Lord. God had already on his part promised to be their God, Jehoiada could shew them that in the book of the testimony; now the king and people on their part must covenant and agree that *they will be the Lord's people*: in this covenant the king stands upon the same level with his subjects, and is so much bound as any of them to serve the Lord. By this engagement they renounced Baal, whom many of them had worshipped, and resigned themselves to God's government: it was well with a people, when all the changes that pass over them help to revive, strengthen, and advance the interests of religion among them. And those are likely to prosper, who set out in the world under fresh and sensible obligations to God and their duty; by our bonds to God, the bonds of every relation are strengthened, *they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us*, 2 Cor. viii. 5.

(2.) He then settled both the coronation oath, and the oath of allegiance, the *pacta conventa*, between the king and the people by which the king was obliged to govern according to law, and to protect his subjects, and they obliged while he did so to obey him, and to bear faith and true allegiance to him. Covenants are of use both to mind us of, and to bind us to those duties which we are already obliged to; it is good in all relations for the parties to understand one another fully, particularly in that between prince and subject, that the one may understand the limits of his power and prerogative, the other of his liberty and property; and never may the ancient land-marks, which our fathers have set before them be removed.

2. The good beginning he raised on these foundations.

(1.) Pursuant to their covenant with God they immediately abolished idolatry, which the preceding kings, in compliance with the house of Ahab, had introduced, ver. 18. *All the people of the land*, the mob got together, to shew their zeal against idolatry; and every one, now they were so well headed, would lend a hand to pull down Baal's temple, his altars and his images

images; all his worshippers, it should seem deserted him, only his priest Mattan stuck to his altar alone, though all men forsook Baal he would not, and there he was slain, the best sacrifice that ever was offered upon that altar; having destroyed Baal's temple, they appointed officers over the house of God, to see that the service of God was regularly performed by the proper persons in due time, and according to the instituted manner.

(2.) Pursuant to their covenant with one another, they expressed a mutual readiness to, and satisfaction in each other. 1. The king was brought in state to the royal palace, and sat there on the throne of judgment, *the throne of the house of David*, ver. 19. ready to receive petitions and appeals, which he would refer to Jehoiada to give answers to, and to give judgment upon. 2. The people rejoiced, and Jerusalem was in quiet, ver. 20. and Josephus saith they kept a feast of joy many days, making good Solomon's observation, *Prov. xii. 10. When it goes well with the righteous the city rejoiceth, and when the wicked perish there is shouting.*

C H A P. XII.

This chapter gives us the history of the reign of Joash, which doth not answer that glorious beginning of it, which we had an account of in the foregoing chapter; he was not so illustrious at forty years old as he was at seven, yet his reign is to be reckoned one of the better sort, and appears much worse in Chronicles than it doth here, 2 Chron. xxiv. for there we find the blood of one of God's prophets laid at his door; here we are only told, (1.) That he did well while Jehoiada lived, ver. 1—3. (2.) That he was careful and active to repair the temple, ver. 4—16. (3.) That after a sneaking composition with Hazael, ver. 17, 18. he died inglorious, ver. 19—21.

1. **I**N the seventh year of Jehu, Jehoash began to reign; and forty years reigned he in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. 2. And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all his days, wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him. 3. But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.

The general account here given of Joash is,

1. That he reigned forty years, and beginning his reign when he was very young might in a course of nature have continued much longer, for he was but forty-seven years old, ver. 1.

2. That he did that which was right, as long as Jehoiada lived, to instruct him, ver. 2. Many young men have come too soon to an estate, have had wealth, and power, and liberty, before they knew how to use it, and it has been of ill consequence to them, but against this danger Joash was well guarded, (1.) By having such a good director as Jehoiada was, so wise, and experienced, and faithful to him. (2.) By having so much wisdom as to hearken to him and be directed by him, even when he was grown up. Note. It is a great mercy to young people, and especially to young princes and young gentlemen, to be under a good conduct, and to have those about them that will instruct them to do that which is right in the sight of the Lord, and they then do wisely and well for themselves, when they are willing to be counselled and ruled by such; a child left to himself brings his mother to shame, but a child left to such a tuition may bring himself to honour and comfort.

3. That the high places were taken away, ver. 3. Up and down the country they had altars both for sacrifice and incense, to the honour of the God of Israel only, but in competition with and at least an implicit contempt of his altar at Jerusalem. These private altars, perhaps, had been more used in the late bad reigns than formerly, because it was not safe to go up to Jerusalem, nor was the temple-service performed as it should have been, and it may be for that reason Jehoiada connived at them, because some well-meaning people were glad of them when they could not have better, and he hoped that the reforming of the temple and putting things into a good posture there, would by degrees draw people from their high places, and they would dwindle of themselves, or perhaps neither the king nor the priest had zeal enough to carry on their reformation so far, nor courage and strength enough to encounter such an inveterate usage.

4. ¶ And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the LORD, even the money of every one that passeth the account, the money that every man is set at, and all the money that cometh into any man's hand, to bring into the house of the LORD. 5. Let the priests take it to them, every man of his acquaintance, and let them repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found. 6. But it was so, that in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash, the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house. 7. Then king Jehoash, called for Jehoiada the priest, and the other priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore receive no more money of your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house. 8. And the priests consented to receive no more money of the people, neither to repair the breaches of the house. 9. But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar on the right-side, as one cometh into the house of the LORD: and the priests that kept the door, put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the LORD. 10. And it was so, when they saw that there was much money in the chest, that the king's scribe, and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags, and told the money that was found in the house of the LORD. 11. And they gave the money being told, into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of the LORD: and they laid it out to the car-

penters and builders, that wrought upon the house of the LORD. 12. And to the masons and hewers of stone, and to buy timber and hewed stone to repair the breaches of the house of the LORD, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it. 13. Howbeit, there were not made for the house of the LORD bowls of silver, snuffers, basons, trumpets, and vessels of gold, or vessels of silver, of the money that was brought into the house of the LORD. 14. But they gave that to the workmen, and repaired therewith the house of the LORD. 15. Moreover, they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully. 16. The trespass-money, and sin-money was not brought into the house of the LORD: it was the priests'.

We have here an account of the repairing of the temple in the reign of Joash.

1. It seems the temple was gone out of repair; though Solomon built it very strong, of the best materials, and in the best manner, yet in time it went to decay, and there were breaches found in it, ver. 5. in the roofs or walls, or floors, the ceiling, or wainscoting, or windows, or partitions of the court; even temples themselves are the worse for the wearing; the heavenly temple will never wax old. Yet it was not only the teeth of time that made these breaches, the sons of Athaliah had broken up the house of God, 2 Chron. xxiv. 7. and out of enmity to the service of the temple had damaged the building of it, and the priests had not taken care to repair the breaches in time so that they went worse and worse; unworthy were those husbandmen to have this valuable vineyard let out to them upon such easy terms, who could not afford to keep the wine-press in due and tenantable repair, Matt. xxi. 33. justly did their great Lord sue them for this permissive waste, and by his judgments recover locum vastatum, (as the law speaks) when this neglected temple was laid even with the ground.

2. The king himself was (as it should seem) the first and forwardest man that took care for the repair of it; we do not find that the priests complained of it; or that Jehoiada himself was active in it, but the king was zealous in the matter, (1.) Because he was king, and God expects and requires from those that have power that they use it for the maintenance and support of religion, the redress of grievances, and reparation of decays, for the exciting and engaging of ministers to do their part, and the people theirs. (2.) Because the temple had been both his nursery and his sanctuary when he was a child, in a grateful remembrance of which he now appeared zealous for the honour of it. They who have experienced the comfort and benefit of religious assemblies will make the reproach of them their burden, (Zeph. iii. 18.) the support of them their care, and the prosperity of them their chief joy.

3. The priests were ordered to collect money for these repairs, and to take care that the work was done; the king had the affairs of his kingdom to mind, and could not himself inspect this affair, but he employed the priests to manage it. (1.) He gave them orders for the levying of the money of the dedicated things, they must not stay till it was paid in, but they must call for it where they knew it was due in their respective districts, either as redemption money, by virtue of the law, Exod. xxx. 13. or as estimation money, by virtue of the law, Levit. xxvii. 2, 3, or as a free-will offering, ver. 4. this they were to gather every man of his acquaintance, and it was supposed there was no man but had acquaintance with some or other of the priests. Note, Those we have particular acquaintance with, we should take the opportunity that gives us of exciting them to that which is good. (2.) He gave them orders for laying out the money they had levied in repairing the breaches of the house, ver. 5.

This method did not answer the intention, ver. 6. Little money was raised, either the priests were careless, and did not call to the people to pay in their dues, or the people had so little confidence in the priests management that they were backward to pay money into their hands; if they were distrustful without cause it was the peoples shame; if with, it was more theirs; but what money was raised was not applied to the proper use, the breaches of the house were not repaired, the priests thought it might serve as well as it had done, and therefore put it off from time to time; church work uses to be slow work, but it is pity church-men of all men should be slow at it. Perhaps, what little money they raised they thought it necessary to use it for the maintenance of the priests, which must needs fall much short when ten tribes were wholly revolted, and the other two wretchedly corrupted.

5. Another method was therefore taken; the king has his heart much upon it, to have the breaches of the house repaired, ver. 7. His apostacy at last gives us cause to question whether he had as good an affection for the service of the temple as he had for the structure, many have been zealous for building and beautifying churches, and other forms of godliness, who yet have been strangers to the power of it; however, we commend his zeal, and blame him not for reproving even his tutor Jehoiada himself when he saw him remiss; and so convincing was his reproof that the priests owned themselves unworthy to be any longer employed, and consented to the taking of some other measures, and the giving up of the money they had received into other hands, ver. 8. It was honestly done, when they found they had not spirit to do it themselves, not to hinder other people from doing it. Another course was taken,

(1.) For raising money, ver. 9, 10. The money was not paid into private hands, but put into a public chest, and then people brought it in readily and in great abundance, not only their dues, but their free-will offerings for so good a work. The high priest and the secretary of state counted the money out of the chest, and laid it by in specie for the use to which it was appropriated. When public distributions are made faithfully, public contributions will be made cheerfully. The money that was given, (1.) Was dropped into the chest through a hole in the lid, past recalc, to imitate that what has been once resigned to God, must never be resumed; every man as he purporeth in his heart so let him give. (2.) The chest was put on the right-hand as they went in, which, some think, is alluded to in that rule of charity which our Saviour gives, let not thy left-hand know what thy right-hand doth. But while they were getting all they could for the repair of the temple, they did not break in upon that which was the stated maintenance of the priests, ver. 16. the trespass-money and the sin-money which was given to them by that law, Levit. v. 15, 16. was reserved to them; let not the servants of the temple be starved under colour of repairing the breaches of it.

(2.) For laying out the money that was raised. 1. They did not put it into the hands of the priests, who were not versed in affairs of this nature, having other work to mind, but into the hands of those that did the work, or at least had the oversight of it, ver. 11. They were fittest to be intrusted with this business whose employment lay that way, tractant fabrilis fabri; but let not those who are called to war the holy warfare entangle themselves in the affairs of this life; they that were thus intrusted

trusted did the business. 1. Carefully purchasing materials, and paying workmen, *ver.* 12. Business is done with expedition when those are employed in it that understand it, and know which way to go about it. 2. Faithfully, such a reputation they got for honesty that there was no occasion to examine their bills or audit their accounts; let all that are intrusted with public money or public work learn hence to deal faithfully, as those that know God will reckon with them whether men do or no; those that think it is no sin to cheat the government, cheat the country, or cheat the church, will be of another mind when God shall set their sins in order before them.

2. They did not lay it out in ornaments for the temple, in vessels of gold or silver, but in necessary repairs first, *ver.* 13. whence we may learn in all our expences to give that the preference which is most needful, and in dealing for the public to deal as we would for ourselves; after the repairs were finished we find the overplus turned into plate for the service of the temple, *2 Chron.* xxv. 14.

17. ¶ Then Hazael king of Syria went up, and fought against Gath, and took it: and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem. 18. And Jehoash king of Judah took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold that was found in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and in the king's house, and sent it to Hazael king of Syria, and he went away from Jerusalem. 19. ¶ And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 20. And his servants arose, and made a conspiracy, and slew Joash in the house of Millo, which goeth down to Silla. 21. For Jozachar the son of Shimeath, and Jehozabad the son of Shomar, his servants, smote him and he died; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David, and Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.

When Joash had revolted from God, and was become both an idolater and a persecutor, the hand of the Lord went out against him, and his *last state was worse than his first*.

1. His wealth and honour became an easy prey to his neighbours. Hazael, when he had chastised Israel, *chap.* x. 32. threatened Judah and Jerusalem likewise, took Gath, a strong city, *ver.* 17. and thence intended to march with his forces against Jerusalem; the royal city, the holy city, but being sinful and corrupt, its defence was departed. Joash had neither spirit nor strength to make head against him, but gave him all the hallowed things, and all the gold that was found both in his exchequer and in the treasures of the temple, *ver.* 18. to hire him to march another way. If it were lawful to do this for the public safety, better part with the gold of the temple than expose the temple itself. (1.) If he had not forsaken God and forfeited his protection, his affairs had not been brought to this extremity, but he might have forced Hazael to retire. (2.) He diminished himself and made himself very mean, lost the honour of a prince and a soldier, and of an Israelite too, in alienating the dedicated things. (3.) He impoverished himself and his kingdom. And, (4.) He tempted Hazael to come again, when he could bring home so rich a booty without striking a stroke. And it had this effect, for the next year the host of Syria came up against Jerusalem, destroyed the prince, and plundered the city, *2 Chron.* xxiv. 23, 24.

2. His life became an easy prey to his own servants. They conspired against him, and slew him, *ver.* 20, 21. not aiming at his kingdom, for they opposed not his son's succeeding him, but to be revenged on him for some ill thing he had done; and we are told in Chronicles, that his murdering the prophet, Jehoiada's son, was the provocation. In this, how unrighteous forever they were, (vengeance was not theirs, nor did it belong to them to repay) God was righteous; and this was not the only time that he let even kings know it was at their peril if they touched his anointed, and did his prophets any harm; and that when he comes to make inquisition for blood, the blood of prophets will run the account very high. Thus fell Joash, who began in the spirit and ended in the flesh. God usually sets marks of his displeasure upon apostates, even in this life; for they, of all sinners, do most reproach the Lord.

C H A P. XIII.

This chapter brings us again to the history of the kings of Israel, and particularly of the family of Jehu. We have here an account of the reign, 1. Of his son Jehoahaz, which continued seventeen years. His bad character in general, *ver.* 1, 2. The trouble he was brought into, *ver.* 3. and the low ebb of his affairs, *ver.* 7. His humiliation before God, and God's compassion towards him, *ver.* 4, 5. and again, *ver.* 23. His continuance in his idolatry notwithstanding, *ver.* 6. His death, *ver.* 8, 9. 2. Of his grandson Joash, which continued sixteen years. Here is a general account of his reign in the usual form, *ver.* 11—13. but a particular account of the death of Elisha in his time. The kind visit the king made him, *ver.* 14. and the encouragement he gave the king in his wars with Syria, *ver.* 15—19. His death and burial, *ver.* 20. and a miracle wrought by his bones, *ver.* 21. And lastly, The advantages Joash gained against the Syrians according to his predictions, *ver.* 24, 25.

1. IN the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah king of Judah, Jehoahaz the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years. 2. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom. 3. ¶ And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, all their days. 4. And Jehoahaz besought the LORD, and the LORD hearkened unto him: for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them.

5. (And the LORD gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as before time. 6. Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin, but walked therein: and there remained the grove also in Samaria.) 7. Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing. 8. ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. 9. And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his stead.

This general account of the reign of Jehoahaz, and of the state of Israel during his seventeen years, though short, is long enough to let us see two things, which are very affecting and instructive.

1. The glory of Israel raked up in the ashes, buried and lost, and turned into shame. How unlike doth Israel appear here to what it had been, and might have been! How is its crown profaned, and its honour laid in the dust!

(1.) It was the honour of Israel, that they worshipped the only living and true God, who is a Spirit, an eternal mind, and had rules by which to worship him, of his own appointment: but by *changing the glory of their incorruptible God into the similitude of an ox, the truth of God into a lie*, they lost this honour, and levelled themselves with the nations that worshipped the work of their own hands. We find here the king followed the sins of Jeroboam, *ver.* 2. and the people departed not from them, but walked therein, *ver.* 6. There could not be a greater reproach than these two idolized calves were to a people that were instructed in the service of God, and intrusted with the lively oracles. In all the history of the ten tribes, we never find the least shock given to that idolatry, but in every reign still the calf was their god, and they separated themselves to that shame.

(2.) It was the honour of Israel, that they were taken under the special protection of heaven, God himself was their defence, the shield of their help, and the sword of their excellency. Happy wast thou, O Israel, upon this account. But here, as often before, we find them stripped of this glory, and exposed to the insults of all their neighbours. They, by their sins, provoked God to anger, and then he delivered them into the hands of Hazael and Ben-hadad, *ver.* 3. Hazael oppressed Israel, *ver.* 22. Sure never was any nation so often plucked and pilaged by their neighbours as Israel was. This they brought upon themselves by sin; when they had provoked God to pluck up their hedge, the goodness of their land did but tempt their neighbours to prey upon them. So low was Israel brought in this reign by the many depredations which the Syrians made upon them, that the militia of the kingdom, and all the force they could bring into the field, was but *fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen*, a despicable muster, *ver.* 7. Are the thousands of Israel come to this? *How is the gold become dim!* The debauching of a nation, will certainly be the debating of it.

2. Some sparks of Israel's ancient honour appearing in these ashes. It is not quite forgotten, notwithstanding all these quarrels, that this people is the Israel of God, and he the God of Israel. For,

(1.) It was the ancient honour of Israel, that they were a praying people: And here we find a somewhat of that honour revived, for Jehoahaz their king, in his distress, besought the Lord, *ver.* 4. applied himself for help, not to the calves, what help could they give him? but to the Lord. It becomes kings to be beggars at God's door; and the greatest of men to be humble petitioners at the footstool of his throne. Need will drive them to it.

(2.) It was the ancient honour of Israel, that they had God rich unto them in all that which they called upon him for, *Deut.* iv. 7. and so he was here. Though he might justly have rejected the prayer, as an abomination to him, yet the Lord hearkened unto Jehoahaz, and to his prayer for himself and for his people, *ver.* 4. and he gave Israel a saviour, *ver.* 5. not Jehoahaz himself, for all his days Hazael oppressed Israel, *ver.* 22. but his son, to whom, in answer to his father's prayers, God gave success against the Syrians, so that he recovered the cities which they had taken from his father, *ver.* 25. This gracious answer God gave to the prayer of Jehoahaz, not for his sake, or the sake of that unworthy people, but in remembrance of his covenant with Abraham, *ver.* 23. which in such exigencies as these he had long since promised to have respect to, *Lev.* xxvi. 42. See how swift God is to show mercy, how ready to hear prayers; how willing to find out any reason to be gracious, else he would not look so far back as that ancient covenant which Israel hath so often broken, and forfeited all the benefit of. Let this invite and engage us for ever to him; and encourage even those that have forsaken him, to return and repent: for there is forgiveness with him that he may be feared.

10. ¶ In the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah, began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned sixteen years. 11. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin; but he walked therein. 12. And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 13. And Joash slept with his fathers; and Jeroboam sat upon his throne: and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. 14. ¶ Now Elisha was fallen sick, of his sickness whereof he died, and Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. 15. And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows: and he took unto him bow and arrows. 16. And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow; and he put his hand.

hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands. 17. And he said, Open the window eastward: and he opened it. Then Elisha said, Shoot: and he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed them. 18. And he said, Take the arrows: and he took them. And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground: and he smote thrice, and stayed. 19. And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times, then hadst thou smitten Syria, till thou hadst consumed it: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice.

We have here Jehoash, or Joash the son of Jehoahaz, and grandson of Jehu upon the throne of Israel. Probably, the house of Jehu intended some respect to the house of David, when they gave this heir-apparent to the crown the same name with him that was then king of Judah.

1. The general account here given of him and his reign, is much the same with what we have already met with, and as little in it remarkable, ver. 10—13. He was none of the worst, and yet because he kept up that ancient and politic idolatry of the house of Jeroboam, it is said, *He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord*. That one evil was enough to leave an indelible mark of infamy upon his name; for how little evil soever men saw in it, it was, *in the sight of the Lord*, a very ill thing, and we are sure that his judgment is according to truth. It is observable, how lightly the inspired penman passeth over his acts, and his might wherewith he warred, leaving it to the common historians to record them, while he takes notice only of the respect he shewed to Elisha. One good action shall make a better figure in God's book, than twenty great ones; and in his account, it gains a man a much better reputation to honour a prophet, than to conquer a king and his army.

2. The particular account of what past between him and Elisha, has several things in it remarkable.

(1.) Elisha fell sick, ver. 14. Observe, 1. He lived long; for it was now about sixty years since he was first called to be a prophet. It was a great mercy to Israel, and especially to the sons of the prophets, that he was continued so long a burning and shining light. Elisha finished his testimony in a fourth part of that time. God's prophets have their day set them, some longer, others shorter, as infinite wisdom sees fit. 2. All the latter part of his time, from the anointing of Jehu, which was forty-five years before Joash began his reign, we find no mention made of him, or of any thing he did, till we find him here upon his death-bed. He might be useful to the last, and yet not so famous as he had sometimes been. The time of his flourishing was less than the time of his living. Let not old people complain of obscurity, but rather be well pleased with retirement. 3. The Spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha, and yet he is not sent for to heaven on a fiery chariot, as Elijah was, but goes the common road out of the world, and is visited with the visitation of all men. If God honour some above others, who yet are not inferior to them in gift or graces, who shall find fault? *May he not do what he will with his own?*

(2.) King Joash visited him in his sickness, and wept over him, ver. 14. This was an evidence of some good in him, that he had a value and affection for a faithful prophet; so far was he from hating and persecuting him as a troubler of Israel, that he loved and honoured him as one of the greatest blessings of his kingdom, and lamented the loss of him. There have been those who would not be obedient to the word of God, and yet have had the faithful ministers of it so manifested in their consciences, that they could not but have an honour for them. Observe here, (1.) When the king heard of Elisha's sickness, he came to visit him, and to receive his dying counsel and blessing, and it was no disparagement to him, though a king, thus to honour one whom God honoured. Note, It may turn much to our spiritual advantage, to attend the sick-beds and death-beds of good ministers and other good men, that we may learn to die, and may be encouraged in religion by the living comforts they have from it in a dying hour. (2.) Though Elisha was very old, had been a great while useful, and in a course of nature could not continue long; yet the king, when he saw him sick and likely to die, wept over him. The aged are most experienced, and therefore can worst be spared. In many causes, one old witness is worth ten young ones. (3.) He lamented him in the same words with which Elisha had himself lamented the removal of Elijah. *My father, my father*. It is probable he had heard or read of them in that famous story. Note, Those that give just honours to the generation that goes before them, are often recompensed with the like from the generation that comes after them. He that watereth, that watereth with tears, shall be watered, shall be so watered also himself, when it comes to his own turn, Prov. xi. 25. (4.) This king was herein selfish, he lamented the loss of Elisha, because he was the chariots and horsemen of Israel, and therefore could be ill spared when Israel was so poor in chariots and horsemen, as we find they were, ver. 7. when they had in all but fifty horsemen and ten chariots. They who consider how much good men contribute to the defence of a nation, and the keeping off of God's judgments, will see cause to lament the removal of them.

(3.) Elisha gave the king great assurances of his success against the Syrians, Israel's great oppressors, and encouraged him to prosecute the war against them with vigour. Elisha was aware that therefore he was loth to part with him, because he looked upon him as the great bulwark of the kingdom against that common enemy, and depended much upon his blessings and prayers in his designs against them. Well, saith Elisha, if that be it that makes thee take on thus, let not that trouble thee, thou shalt be victorious over the Syrians when I am in my grave: *I die, but God will surely visit you*. He has the residue of the spirit, and can raise up other prophets to pray for you. God's grace is not tied to one hand. He can bury his workmen, and yet carry on his work.

To animate the king against the Syrians, he gives him a sign; orders him to take bow and arrows, ver. 15. to intimate to him, that in order to the deliverance of his kingdom from the Syrians, he must put himself into a military posture, and resolve to undergo the perils and fatigues of war; God would be the agent, but he must be the instrument. And that he should be successful, he gives him a token, by directing him,

1. To shoot an arrow towards Syria, ver. 16, 17. The king, no doubt, knew how to manage a bow better than the prophet did, and yet because the arrow now to be shot was to have its significance from the divine institution, as if he were now to be disciplined, he receives the words of command from the prophet. *Put thy hand upon the bow: Open the window: Shoot*. Nay, as if he had been a child that never drew a bow before, *Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands*, to signify that in all his expeditions against the Syrians, he must look up to God for direction and strength;

must reckon his own hands not sufficient for him, but go on in a dependence upon divine aid, *He teacheth my hands to war*, Psal. xviii. 34. cxliv. 1. The trembling hands of a dying prophet, as they signified the concurrence and communication of the power of God, gave this arrow more force than the hands of the king in his full strength. The Syrians had made themselves masters of the country that lay eastward, 2 Kings x. 33. Thitherward therefore the arrow is directed, and such an interpretation given by the prophet of the shooting of this arrow, though shot at rovers, as made it, 1. A commission to the king to attack the Syrians, notwithstanding their power and possession. 2. A promise of success therein. It is the arrow of the Lord's deliverance, even the arrow of deliverance from Syria. It is God that commands deliverance, and when he will effect, who can hinder? The arrow of deliverance is his. He shoots out his arrows, and the work is done, Psal. xviii. 14. *Thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek*, where they are now encamped, or where they are to have a general rendezvous of their forces, till thou have consumed those of them that are vexatious and oppressive to thee and thy kingdom.

2. To strike with the arrows, ver. 18, 19. The prophet having in God's name assured him of victory over the Syrians, he will now try what improvement he will make of his victories, whether he will push them on with more zeal than Aphek did, when Ben-hadad lay at his mercy. For the trial of this, he bids him *smite with the arrows on the ground*: Believe them brought to the ground by the arrow of the Lord's deliverance, and laid at thy feet, and now shew me what thou wilt do to them when thou hast them down, whether thou wilt do as David did when God gave him the necks of his enemies, beat them small as the dust before the wind, Psal. xviii. 40—42. The king shewed not that eagerness and flame which one might have expected upon this occasion, but smote thrice, and no more. Either out of foolish tenderness to the Syrians, he smote as if he were afraid of hurting them, at least of ruining them; willing to shew mercy to them that never did nor ever would shew mercy to him or his people. Or, perhaps, he smote but thrice, and very coldly, because he thought it but a silly thing, that it looked idle and childish for a king to beat the floor with his arrows; and thrice was often enough for him to play the fool merely to please the prophet. But by contemplating the sign, he lost the thing signified, solely to the grief of the dying prophet, who was wroth with him, and told him he should have smitten five or six times: Not being straitened in the power and promise of God, why should he be straitened in his own expectations and endeavours? Note, It cannot but be a trouble to good men, to see those they wish well to stand in their own light, and forsake their own mercies; to see them lose their advantage against their spiritual enemies, and to give them advantage.

20 ¶ And Elisha died, and they buried him: and the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming in of the year. 21. And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet. 22. ¶ But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. 23. And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet. 24. So Hazael king of Syria died, and Ben-hadad his son reigned in his stead. 25. And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, the cities which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war: three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel.

We must here attend,

1. The sepulchre of Elisha: he died in a good old age, and they buried him, and what follows shews,

(1.) What power there was in his life to keep off judgments; for as soon as he was dead, the bands of the Moabites invaded the land; not great armies to face them in the field, but roving sculking bands, that murdered and plundered by surprise. God has many ways to chastise a provoking people. The king was apprehensive of danger only from the Syrians, but behold the Moabites invade him. Trouble comes sometimes from that point whence we least feared it. The mentioning of this immediately upon the death of Elisha, intimates, that the removal of God's faithful prophets, is a presage of judgments coming. When ambassadors are recalled, heralds may be expected:

(2.) What power there was in the dead body; it communicated life to another dead body, ver. 21. This great miracle, though very briefly related, was a mighty proof of his mission, and a confirmation of all his prophecies: It was also a plain indication of another life after this; when Elisha died, there was not an end of him, for then he could not have done this: From operation we may infer existence. By this it appeared that the Lord was still the God of Elisha, therefore Elisha still lived, for *he is not the God of the dead, but of the living*. And it may perhaps have a reference to Christ, by whose death and burial the grave is made to all believers a safe and happy passage to life. It likewise intimated, that though Elisha was dead, yet in the virtue of the promises made by him, Israel's interests, though they seemed quite sunk and lost, should revive and flourish again. The neighbours were carrying the dead body of a man to the grave, and fearing to fall into the hands of the Moabites, a party of whom they saw at a distance near the place where the body was to be interred, they laid the corpse in the next convenient place, which proved to be Elisha's sepulchre. The dead man upon a touch of his bones revived, and, it is likely, went home again with his friends. Josephus relates the story otherwise; That some thieves having robbed and murdered an honest traveller, threw his dead body into Elisha's grave, and it immediately revived. Elijah was honoured in his departure, Elisha was honoured after his departure. God thus dispenseth honours as he pleaseth, but one way or other the rest of all the saints will be glorious, Isai. xi. 10. It is good being near the saints, and having our lot with them both in life and death.

2. The word of Joash king of Israel; and we find it successful against the Syrians.

(1.) The cause of his success was God's favour, ver. 23. *The Lord was gracious unto them, had compassion on them* in their miseries, and respect unto them. The several expressions here of the same import, call upon us to observe and admire the triumphs of divine goodness in the deliverance of such

a provoking people. It was of the Lord's mercies that they were not consumed; because he would not destroy them as yet. He foresaw they would destroy themselves at last, but as yet he would relieve them, and give them space to repent. The slowness of God's progress against sinners must be construed to the advancement of his mercy, not the impeachment of his justice.

(2.) The effect of his success was Israel's benefit. He recovered out of the hands of Ben-hadad the cities of Israel which the Syrians were possessed of, ver. 25. This was a great kindness to the cities themselves, which were hereby brought from under the yoke of oppression; and to the whole kingdom, which was much strengthened by the reduction of those cities. Thrice Joash beat the Syrians, just as often as he had struck the ground with the arrows, and then a full stop was put to the course of his victories. Many have repented, when it was too late, of their distrusts, and the straits of their desires.

C H A P. XIV.

This chapter continues the history of the succession in the kingdom both of Judah and Israel. (1.) In the kingdom of Judah, here is the intire history (as much as is recorded in this book) of Amaziah's reign; his good character, ver. 1—4. The justice he executed on the murderers of his father; ver. 5, 6. His victory over the Edomites, ver. 7. His war with Joash, and his defeat in that war, ver. 8—14. And his fall at last by a conspiracy against him, ver. 17—20. And the beginning of the history of Azariah, ver. 21, 22. (2.) In the kingdom of Israel, the conclusion of the reign of Joash, ver. 15, 16. And the intire history of Jeroboam his son, the second of that name, ver. 23—29. How many great men are made to stand in a little compass in God's book.

IN the second year of Joash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel, reigned Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah. 2. He was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. 3. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, yet not like David his father: he did according to all things as Joash his father did. 4. Howbeit, the high places were not taken away: as yet the people did sacrifice, and burnt incense on the high places. 5. ¶ And it came to pass as soon as the kingdom was confirmed in his hand, that he slew his servants which had slain the king his father. 6. But the children of the murderers he slew not: according to that which is written in the book of the law of Moses, wherein the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor the children be put to death for their fathers: but every man shall be put to death for his own sin. 7. He slew of Edom in the valley of salt, ten thousand, and took Selah by war, and called the name of it Joktheel, unto this day.

Amaziah is the king whom here we have an account of, the son and successor of Joash: Let us take a view of him,

1. In the temple; and there he did tolerably well, like Joash, but not like David, ver. 3. He began well, but did not persevere. He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, kept up his attendance on God's altars, and his attention to God's word, yet not like David. It is not enough to do that which our pious predecessor did, merely to keep up the usage, but we must do it as they did it, from the same principle of faith and devotion, and with the same sincerity and resolution. It is here taken notice of as before, that the high places were not taken away, ver. 4. It is hard to get clear of those corruptions, which by long usage have gained both prescription and a favourable opinion.

1. On the bench; and there we have him doing justice on the traitors that murdered his father; not as soon as ever he came to the crown, lest it should have occasioned some disturbance, but he prudently deferred it till the kingdom was confirmed in his hand, ver. 5. To weaken a seditious party gradually, when it is not safe to provoke, often proves the way to ruin it effectually. Justice strikes surely by striking slowly, and is often executed most prudently, when it is not executed presently. Wisdom here is profitable to direct. Amaziah did thus, (1.) According to the rule of the law, that ancient rule, that he that sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. Never let traitors or murderers expect to come to their graves like other men. Let them flee to the pit, and let no man stay them. 2. Under the limitation of the law. The children of murderers he slew not, because the law of Moses had expressly provided that the children should not be put to death for the fathers, ver. 6. It is probable, this is taken notice of, because there were those about him that advised him to that rigour, both in revenge, because the crime was extraordinary, the murder of a king; and in policy, that the children might not plot against him in revenge of their father's death. But against these insinuations he opposed the express law of God, Dent. xxiv. 15, which he was to judge by, and which he resolved to adhere to, and trust God with the issue. God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, because every man is guilty before him, and owes him a death; so that if he require the life for the father's sin, he doth no wrong, the sinner having forfeited it already by his own: But he doth not allow earthly princes to do thus, the children before them are innocent, and therefore must not suffer as guilty.

3. In the field; and there we find him triumphing over the Edomites, ver. 7. Edom had revolted from under the hand of Judah in Joram's time, chap. viii. 22. now he makes war upon them to bring them back to their allegiance, kills ten thousand, and takes the chief city of Arabia the stony, called Selah, a rock, and gave it a new name. We shall find a larger account of this expedition, 2 Chron. xxv. 5, &c.

8. ¶ Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu king of Israel, saying, Come, let us look one another in the face. 9. And Jehoash the king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Ju-

dah, saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon, sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle. 10. Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine heart hath lifted thee up: glory of this, and tarry at home: for why shouldst thou meddle to thy hurt, that thou shouldst fall, even thou, and Judah with thee? 11. But Amaziah would not hear: therefore Jehoash king of Israel went up, and he, and Amaziah king of Judah looked one another in the face at Beth-shechem, which belongeth to Judah. 12. And Judah was put to the worse before Israel, and they fled every man to their tents. 13. And Jehoash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Jehoash the son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shechem, and came to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, from the gate of Ephraim, unto the corner gate, four hundred cubits. 14. And he took all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and hostages, and returned to Samaria.

For several successions after the division of the kingdoms, that of Judah suffered much by the enmity of Israel. After Asa's time, for several successions, it suffered more by the friendship of Israel, and by the alliance and affinity they made with them; But now we meet with hostility between them again, which had not been for some ages before.

1. Amaziah, upon no provocation, and without shewing any cause of quarrel, challengeth Joash into the field, ver. 8. Come let us look one another in the face; let us try our strength in battle. Had he challenged him to a personal duel only, the error had remained with himself, but each must bring all their forces into the field, and thousands of lives on both sides must be sacrificed to his capricious humour. Hereby he shewed himself proud, presumptuous, and prodigal of blood. Some think he intended to avenge the injury, which the dismissed disgusted Israelites had lately done to his country in their return, 2 Chron. xxv. 13. and that he had also the vanity, to think of subduing the kingdom of Israel, and re-uniting it to Judah. A fool's lips thus enter into contention, and his mouth causeth for strokes. They that challenge are chargeable with that beginning of strife, which is as the letting forth of water. He that is fond either to fight, or to go to law, may perhaps have enough of it quickly, and be the first that repents it.

2. Joash sends him a grave rebuke for his challenge, with advice to withdraw it, ver. 10. 1. He mortifies his pride, by comparing himself to a cedar, a stately tree, and Amaziah to a thistle, a sorry weed; telling him, he was so far from fearing him, that he despised him; and scorned as much to have any thing to do with him, or to make any alliance with him, as the cedar would to match his daughter to a thistle. The ancient house of David he thinks not worthy to be named the same day with the house of Jehu, though an upstart. How can a humble man smile to hear two proud and scornful men set their wits on work, to vilify and under-value one another? 2. He foretels his fall, a wild beast trode down the thistle, and so put an end to his treaty with the cedar; so easily doth Joash think his forces can crush Amaziah, and so unable doth he think him to make any resistance. 3. He shews him the folly of his challenge, Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, a weak, unarmed, undisciplined body of men, and therefore thinkest thou canst carry all before thee, and subdue the regular forces of Israel with as much ease; thine heart hath lifted thee up. See where the root of all sin lies, it is in the heart, thence it flows, and that must bear the blame; it is not providence, the event, the occasion, whatever it is, that makes men proud, or secure, or discontented, or the like, but it is their own heart that doth it, thou art proud of the blow thou hast given to Edom, as if that had made thee formidable to all mankind. Those wretchedly deceive themselves that magnify their own performances, and because they have been blessed with some little success and reputation, conclude themselves fit for any thing, and no less sure of it. 4. He counsels him to be content with the honour he had won, and not to hazard that, by grasping at more that was out of his reach; Why shouldst thou meddle to thy hurt? as fools often do that will be meddling, Prov. xx. 3. Many have had wealth and honour enough, if they had but known when they had enough; he warns him of the consequence, that it would be fatal not to himself only, but to his kingdom, which he ought to protect.

3. Amaziah persisted in his resolution, and the issue was bad, he had better have tarried at home, for Joash gave him such a look in the face as to put him to confusion; challengers commonly prove to be on the losing side. 1. His army was routed and dispersed, ver. 12. Josephus saith, when they were to engage, they were struck with such a terror that they did not strike a stroke, but every one made the best of his way. 2. He himself was taken prisoner by the king of Israel, and then had enough of looking him in the face. Amaziah's pedigree comes in here somewhat abruptly, the son of Joash, the son of Ahaziah, because perhaps he had gloried in the dignity of his ancestors, and now smarted for their iniquity. 3. The conqueror entered Jerusalem, which tamely opened to him, and yet he broke down their wall (and, as Josephus saith, drove his chariot in triumph through the breach) in reproach to them, and that he might, when he pleased, take possession of the royal city. 4. He plundered Jerusalem, took away all that was valuable, and returned to Samaria laden with spoils, ver. 14. It was said of Joash, that he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and of Amaziah, that he did that which was right, and yet Joash triumphs thus over Amaziah, and why so? Because God would shew in Amaziah's fate that he resists the proud, or because, whatever they were otherwise, Joash had lately been respectful to one of God's prophets, chap. xiii. 14. but Amaziah had been abusive to another, 2 Chron. xxv. 16. and God will honour those that honour him in his prophets, but those who despise them, and him in them, shall be lightly esteemed.

15. ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoash which he did, and his might, and how he fought with Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 16. And Jehoash slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; and Jeroboam his son reigned in his stead. 17. ¶ And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah,

Judah, lived after the death of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel, fifteen years. 18. And the rest of the acts of Amaziah, *are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?* 19. Now they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem: and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish, and slew him there. 20. And they brought him on horses; and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David. 21. ¶ And all the people of Judah took Azariah (which was sixteen years old) and made him king instead of his father Amaziah. 22. He built Elath, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers.

Here are three kings brought to their graves in these few verses.

1. Joash king of Israel, *ver. 15, 16.* We attended his funeral once before, *chap. xiii. 12, 13.* But because the historian had occasion to give a farther account of his life and actions, he again mentions his death and burial.

2. Amaziah king of Judah; fifteen years he survived his conqueror the king of Israel, *ver. 17.* A man may live a great while after he has been flamed, may be soundly mortified, (as Amaziah, no doubt was) and yet not dead; his acts are said to be found written in his annals, *ver. 18.* but not his might, for his cruelty when he was conqueror over the Edomites, and his insolence when he challenged the king of Israel, shewed him void of true courage. He was slain by his own subjects, who hated him for his mal-administration, *ver. 19.* made Jerusalem too hot for him, the ignominious breach made in their walls being occasioned by his folly and presumption; he fled to Lachish; how long he continued concealed or sheltered there we are not told, but at last he was there murdered, *ver. 19.* No farther did the rage of the rebels extend, for they brought him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him there among his ancestors.

3. Azariah succeeded Amaziah, but not till twelve years after his father's death, for Amaziah died in the fifteenth year of Jeroboam, as appears by comparing *ver. 23.* with *ver. 1.* but Azariah did not begin his reign till the twenty-seventh of Jeroboam, *chap. xxi. 1.* for he was but four years old at the death of his father, so that for twelve years, till he came to be sixteen, the government was in the hands of protectors; he reigned very long, *chap. xxv. 2.* and yet the account of his reign is here indifferently huddled up, and broken off abruptly, *ver. 22.* He built Elath, which had belonged to the Edomites, but, it is probable, was recovered by his father, *ver. 7.* after that the king slept with his fathers as if that had been all he did that was worth mentioning, or rather, it is meant of king Amaziah, he did it soon after he died.

23. ¶ In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years. 24. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 25. He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath, unto the sea, of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah the son of Amittai the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher. 26. For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel. 27. And the LORD said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash. 28. ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and Hamath, which belonged to Judah, for Israel, *are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?* 29. And Jeroboam slept with his fathers, even with the kings of Israel; and Zachariah his son reigned in his stead.

Here is an account of the reign of Jeroboam the second; I doubt it is an indication of the affection and adherence of the house of Jehu to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, that they called an heir apparent to the crown by his name, thinking that an honourable name, which in the book of God is infamous and stigmatized as much as any other.

1. His reign was long, the longest of all the reigns of the kings of Israel, he reigned forty-one years, yet his contemporary Azariah the king of Judah reigned longer, even fifty-two years; this Jeroboam reigned just as long as Ahab had done, *1 Kings xv. 10.* yet one did that which was good, and the other that which was evil. We cannot measure men's characters by the length of their lives, or of their outward prosperity, *there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked.*

2. His character was the same with that of the rest of those kings, *he did that which was evil, ver. 24.* for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, he kept up the worship of the calves, and never left that, thinking there was no harm in it, because it had been the way of all his ancestors and predecessors; but a sin is never the less evil in God's sight, whatever it is in ours, for its being an ancient usage: and a frivolous plea it will be against doing good, that we have been accustomed to do evil.

3. Yet he prospered more than most of them, for though in that one thing he did evil in the sight of the Lord, yet it is likely in other respects there was some good found in him, and therefore God owned him.

(1.) By prophecy; he raised up Jonah the son of Amittai, a Galilean, (so much were they mistaken, that said out of Galilee ariseth no prophet, *John vii. 52.*) and by him intimated the purposes of his favour to Israel notwithstanding their provocations, encouraged him in his kingdom to take up arms for the recovery of their ancient possessions, and (which would contribute no little to their success) assured them of victory; it is a sign God has not cast off his people, if he continued faithful ministers among them; when Elishah was gone, that strengthened the hands of Joash, Jonah was sent to encourage his son; happy is the land that hath a succession of prophets running parallel

with a succession of princes, that the word of the Lord may endure for ever; of this Jonah we read much in that little book of scripture that bears his name, it is probable, it was when he was a young man, and fit for such an expedition, that God sent him to Nineveh, and that it was when he had yet been but little conversant with the visions of God, that he flew off and fretted as he did; and if so, this is an undoubted evidence of the forgiveness of his faults and follies, that he was afterwards employed as a messenger of mercy to Israel. A commission amounts to a pardon, and he that had himself found mercy, notwithstanding his provocations, could the better encourage them with the hope of mercy notwithstanding theirs; some that have been foolish and passionate, and have gone about their work very awkwardly at first, yet afterwards have proved useful and eminent men, must not be thrown away for every fault.

2. By providence; the event was according to the word of the Lord, his arms were successful, he restored the coast of Israel, recovered their frontier towns and countries that lay from Hamath in the north to the sea of the plain, *i. e.* the sea of Sodom in the south, all which the Syrians had possessed themselves of, *ver. 25.* Two reasons are here given why God blessed them with those victories, (1.) Because their distress was very great, which made them the objects of his compassion, *ver. 26.* Though he saw not any signs of their repentance and reformation, yet he saw their affliction, that it was very bitter; that they lived in those countries which the enemies were masters of, were miserably oppressed and enslaved, and could call nothing their own; the rest, we may suppose, much impoverished by the frequent incursions the enemy made upon them to plunder them, and continually frightened with their alarms, so that there were none shut up or left, both towns and countries were laid waste and stripped of their wealth, and no helper appeared: to this extremity were they reduced in many parts of the country in the beginning of Jeroboam's reign, when God in mere pity to them, heard the cry of their affliction, (for no mention is made here of the cry of their prayers) and wrought this deliverance for them by the hand of Jeroboam; let those whose case is piteous take comfort from the divine pity; we read of God's bowels of mercy, *Isa. lxiii. 15. Jer. xxxi. 20.* and that he is full of compassion, *Psal. lxxxvi. 15.* 2. Because the decree was not yet gone forth for their utter destruction; he had not as yet said he would blot out the name of Israel, *ver. 27.* and because he had not said it, he would not do it: if it be understood of the dispersion of the ten tribes, he did say it, and do it not long after, reprieves are not pardons; if of the utter extirpation of the name of Israel, he never said it, nor will ever do it, for that name still remains under heaven in the gospel Israel, and will do to the end of time; and because they at present bear that name, which was to have this lasting honour, he shewed them his favour, as well as for the sake of the ancient honour of that name, *chap. xiii. 23.*

Lastly, Here is the conclusion of Jeroboam's reign, we read, *ver. 28.* of his might, and how he warred, but *ver. 29.* he slept with his fathers, for the mightiest must yield unto death, and there is no discharge in that war.

Many prophets there had been in Israel, a constant succession of them in every age, but none of the prophets had left any of their prophecies in writing till those of this age began to do it, and their prophecies are part of the canon of scripture; it was in the reign of this Jeroboam, that Hosea (who continued very long a prophet) began to prophecy, and he was the first that wrote his prophecies, therefore the word of the Lord by him is called the beginning of the word of the Lord, *Hos. i. 2.* Then that part of the word of the Lord began to be written; at the same time Amos prophesied and wrote his prophecy, soon after Micah, and then Isaiah in the days of Ahaz and Hezekiah; thus God never left himself without witness, but in the darkest and most degenerate ages of the church raised up some to be burning and shining lights in it, to their own age by their preaching and living, and a few by their writings to reflect light upon us, on whom the ends of the world are come.

C H A P. XV.

In this chapter, 1. The history of two of the kings of Judah is briefly recorded, (1.) Of Azariah, alias Uzziah, *ver. 1—7.* (2.) Of Jotham, his son, *ver. 32—38.* 2. The history of many of the kings of Israel that reigned at the same time is given us in short, five in succession, who all of them but one went down slain to the pit, and their murderers were their successors. 1. Zachariah, the last of the house of Jehu, reigned six months, and then was slain, and succeeded by Shallum, *ver. 8—12.* 2. Shallum reigned one month, and then was slain, and succeeded by Menahem, *ver. 13—15.* 3. Menahem reigned ten years, or tyrannized rather, such was his barbarous cruelty, *ver. 16.* and unreasonable exactions, *ver. 20.* and then died in his bed, and left his son to succeed him first, and then suffer for him, *ver. 16—22.* 4. Pekahiah reigned two years, and then was slain, and succeeded by Pekah, *ver. 23—26.* 5. Pekah reigned twenty years, and then was slain, and succeeded by Hoshea, the last of all the kings of Israel, *ver. 27—31.* for towards the final destruction of that kingdom things were now working and hastening apace.

1. **I**N the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam, king of Israel, began Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign. 2. Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned two and fifty years in Jerusalem, and his mother's name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. 3. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done: 4. Save that the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places. 5. ¶ And the LORD smote the king, so that he was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house: and Jotham the king's son was over the house, judging the people of the land. 6. And the rest of the acts of Azariah and all that he did, *are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah.* 7. So Azariah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David; and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

This is a short account of the reign of Azariah.

1. Most of it is general, and the same that has been given of others, he began

began young, and reigned long, *ver.* 2. did that which was right for the most part, *ver.* 3. It was happy for the kingdom, that a good reign was a long one, only he had not zeal and courage enough to take away the high places, *ver.* 4.

2. That which is peculiar, *ver.* 5. That God smote him with a leprosy, is more largely related, with the occasion of it, *2 Chron.* xxvi. 16, &c. where we have also a fuller account of the glories of the former part of his reign as well as of the disgraces of the latter part of it. He did that which was right, as Amaziah had done, like him he began well, but failed before he finished. How we are told, (1.) That he was a leper, the greatest of men are not only subject to the common calamities, but also to the common infirmities of the human nature, and if they be guilty of any heinous sin, he as open as the meanness to the most grievous strokes of divine vengeance. (2.) God smote him with this leprosy to chastise him for his presumptuous invasion of the priest's office; if great men be proud men, some way or other God will humble them, and make them know he is both above them and against them, for he resisteth the proud. (3.) That he was a leper to the day of his death; though we have reason to think he repented and the sin was pardoned, yet, for warning to others, he was continued under this mark of God's displeasure as long as he lived, and perhaps it was for the good of his soul that he was so. (4.) That he dwelt in a *several house*, as being made ceremonially unclean by the law, to the discipline of which, though a king, he must submit: he that presumptuously intruded into God's temple, and pretended to be a priest, is justly shut out from his own palace, and shut up as a prisoner or recluse after; we suppose his several house made as convenient and agreeable as might be; some translate it a free house, where he had liberty to take his pleasure: but however, it was a great mortification to one that had been so much a man of honour and a man of business, as he had been, to be cut off from society, and dwell always in a several house: it would almost make life itself a burden, even to kings, though they have never any to converse with but their inferiors, the most contemplative men would soon be weary of it. (5.) That his son was his viceroy in the affairs both of his court, *he was over the house*, and of his kingdom, *he was judging the people of the land*; and it was both a comfort to him and a blessing to his kingdom, that he had such a son to fill up his room.

8. ¶ In the thirty and eighth year of Azariah king of Judah, did Zachariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel in Samaria six months. 9. And he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 10. And Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him, and smote him before the people and slew him, and reigned in his stead. 11. And the rest of the acts of Zachariah, behold, they *are written* in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. 12. This *was* the word of the LORD which he spake unto Jehu, saying, Thy sons shall sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth generation. And so it came to pass. 13. ¶ Shallum the son of Jabesh began to reign in the ninth and thirtieth year of Uzziah king of Judah; and he reigned a full month in Samaria. 14. For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and smote Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria, and slew him, and reigned in his stead. 15. And the rests of the acts of Shallum, and his conspiracy which he made, behold, they *are written* in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. 16. ¶ Then Menahem smote Tiphlah, and all that *were* therein, and the coasts thereof from Tirzah: because they opened not *to him*, therefore he smote *it*; and all the women therein that were with child, he ripped up. 17. In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah king of Judah, began Menahem the son of Gadi to reign over Israel, and reigned ten years in Samaria. 18. And he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD: he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 19. And Pul the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand. 20. And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, *even* of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria: so the king of Assyria turned back and stayed not there in the land. 21. ¶ And the rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, *are they not written* in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 22. And Menahem slept with his fathers, and Pekahiah his son reigned in his stead. 23. ¶ In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekahiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned two years. 24. And he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 25. But Pekah the son of Remaliah, a captain of his, conspired against him, and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob, and Arioh, and with him fifty men of the Gileadites: and he killed him, and reigned in his room. 26. And the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, and all that he did, behold, they *are written* in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. 27. ¶ In the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned twenty years. 28. And

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he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 29. In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah and Janoah, and Zedeth, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, and all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria. 30. And Hothea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah. 31. And the rest of the acts of Pekah, and all that he did, behold, they *are written* in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

The best days of the kingdom of Israel were while the government was in Jehu's family, in his reign and the next three, though there were many abominable corruptions and miserable grievances in Israel, yet the crown went in succession, the kings died in their beds, and some care was taken of public affairs, but now those days are at end, the history which we have in the verses, of about thirty-three years, represent the affairs of that kingdom in the utmost confusion imaginable; woe to them that were with child, (*ver.* 16.) and to them which gave suck in those days, for then must needs be great tribulation, when, for the *transgression of the land*, many were the princes thereof.

1. Let us observe something in general concerning these unhappy revolutions, and the calamities that must needs attend them, these bad times, as they may truly be called.

(1.) God had tried the people of Israel both with judgments and mercies, explained, and the calls of them enforced by his servants the prophets, and yet they continued impenitent and unreformed, and therefore God justly brought these miseries upon them; as Moses had warned them, if ye will yet *walk contrary to me*, I will *punish you yet seven times more*, *Lev.* xxiv. 21, &c.

(2.) God made good his promise to Jehu, that his sons to the fourth generation after him should sit upon the throne of Israel; which was a greater favour than was shewed to any of the royal families either before or after him. God had said it should be so, *chap.* x. 30. and we are told in this chapter, *ver.* 12. that so it came to pass; see how punctual God is to his promises, these calamities God long designed for Israel, and they deserved them, yet they were not inflicted till that word had taken effect to the full; thus God rewarded Jehu for his zeal in destroying the worship of Baal and the house of Ahab; and yet when the measure of the sins of the house of Jehu was full, God avenged upon it the blood then shed, called the blood of Jezebel, *Hos.* i. 4.

(3.) All these kings did that which was *evil in the sight of the Lord*, for they walked in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat: though at variance with one another, yet in this they agreed, to keep up idolatry, and the people loved to have it so, though they were emptied from vessel to vessel, that *rust remained in them*, and that *rust was not changed*; it was sad indeed when their government was so often altered, and yet never for the better, that among all those contending interests, none of them should think it as much their interest to destroy the calves as others had done to support them.

(4.) Each of these (except one) conspired against his predecessor and slew him, Shallum, Menahem, Pekah, and Hothea, all traitors and murderers, and yet all kings awhile: one of them ten, another twenty, another nine years, for God may suffer wickedness to prosper, and to carry away the wealth and honour a while, but sooner or later blood shall have blood, and he that dealt treacherously shall be dealt treacherously with; one wicked man is often made a scourge to another, and every wicked man at length a ruin to himself.

(5.) The ambition of the great men made the nation miserable; here is Tiphlah a city of Israel, barbarously destroyed, with all the coast thereof, by one of these pretenders, *ver.* 16. and no doubt, it was through blood that each of them waded to the throne, nor could any of these kings perish alone; no land can have greater pests, nor Israel worse troubles, than such men as care not how much the welfare and repose of their country is sacrificed to their revenge and affection of dominion.

(6.) While the nation was thus shattered by divisions at home, the kings of Assyria, first one, *ver.* 19. and then another, *ver.* 29. came against it, and did what they pleased; nothing doth more towards the making a nation an easy prey to a common enemy than intestine broils and contentions for the sovereignty; happy the land where that is settled.

(7.) This was the condition of Israel just before they were quite ruined, and carried away captives, for that was done in the ninth year of Hothea, the last of these usurpers; if they had in these days of confusion and perplexity, humbled themselves before God, and sought his face, that final destruction might have been prevented, but when God judgeth he will overcome; these factions, the fruit of an evil spirit sent amongst them, hastened that captivity, for a kingdom thus divided against itself will soon come to desolation.

2. Let us take a short view of the particular reigns.

1. Zachariah the son of Jeroboam, began to reign in the thirty-eighth year of Azariah, or Uzziah king of Judah, *ver.* 8. Some of the most critical chronologers reckon that, between Jeroboam and his son Zachariah, the throne was vacant twenty-two years, others eleven years, through the disturbances and dissensions that were in the kingdom, and then it was not strange that Zachariah was deposed before he was well warm in the throne, he reigned but six months, and then Shallum *slew him before the people*, perhaps, as Caesar was slain in the senate, or he put him to death publicly as a criminal, with the approbation of the people, to whom he had some way or other made himself odious: so ended the line of Jehu.

2. But had Shallum peace who slew his master: No, he had not, *ver.* 13. one month of days measured his reign, and then he was cut off; perhaps to this, the prophet, who then lived, refers, *Hos.* v. 7. *Now shall a month devour them with their portion.* That dominion seldom lasts long, which is founded in blood and falsehood. Menahem, either provoked by his crime, or animated by his example, soon served him as he had served his master, *slew him and reigned in his stead*, *ver.* 14. probable he was general of the army, which then lay encamped at Tirzah, and hearing of Shallum's treason and usurpation hastened to avenge it, as Omri did Zimri's in a like case, *1 Kings* xvi. 17.

3. Menahem held the kingdom ten years, *ver.* 17. But whereas we have heard that the *kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings*, *1 Kings* xx. 31. this Menahem (the scandal of his country) was so prodigiously cruel to those of his own nation that begged a little at submitting to him, that he not only ruined a city, and the coasts thereof, but forgetting that he himself

was born of a woman, *ripped up all the women with child*, ver. 16. We may well wonder that ever it should enter into the heart of any man to be so barbarous, and to be so perfectly lost to humanity itself. By these cruel methods he hoped to strengthen himself, and to frighten all others into his interests, but it seems he did not gain his point, for when the king of Assyria came against him, (1.) So little confidence had he in his people that he durst not meet him as an enemy, but was obliged at a vast expence to purchase a peace with him, (2.) Such need had he of help to confirm the kingdom in his hand, that he made it a part of his bargain with him, (a bargain which, no doubt the king of Assyria knew how to make a good hand of another time) that he should assist him against his own subjects that were disaffected to him. The money wherewith he purchased his friendship was a vast sum, no less than a thousand talents of silver, ver. 19. which Menahem exacted, it is probable, by military execution of *all the mighty men of wealth*, very considerably sparing the poor, and laying the burden, (as was fit) on those that were best able to bear it, and being raised it was given to the king of Assyria, as pay for his army, fifty shekels of silver for each man in it; thus he got clear of the king of Assyria for this time, he stayed not a quarter in the land, ver. 20. but his army now got so rich a booty with so little ado, that it encouraged them to come again not long after, when they laid all waste; thus was he the betrayer of his country, that should have been the protector of it.

4. Pekahiah, the son of Menahem, succeeded his father, but reigned only two years, and then was treacherously slain by Pekah, falling under the load both of his own and of his father's wickedness. It is repeated concerning him, as before, that he *departed not from the sins of Jeroboam*: Still that is mentioned, to shew that God was righteous in bringing that destruction upon them which came not long after, because they hated to be reformed, ver. 24. Pekah, it seems, had some persons of figure in his interest, two of them are here named, ver. 25. and with their help he compassed his design.

5. Pekah, though he got the kingdom by treason, kept it twenty years, ver. 27. so long it was before his violent dealing returned upon his own head, but it returned at last; this Pekah, son of Remaliah, (1.) Made himself more considerable abroad than any of these usurpers, for he was even in the latter end of his time, (in the reign of Ahaz, which began in his seventeenth year,) a great terror to the kingdom of Judah, as we find, *Ish. vii. 1. &c.* (2.) He lost a great part of his kingdom to the king of Assyria, several cities are here named, ver. 29. which were taken from him, all the land of Gilead on the other side of Jordan, and Galilee in the north, containing the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulon, were seized, and the inhabitants carried captive into Assyria; by this judgment God punished him for his attempt upon Judah and Jerusalem; it was then foretold, that within two or three years after he made that attempt, before a child then born should be able to cry *my father and my mother*, the riches of Samaria should be taken away before the king of Assyria, *Ira. viii. 4.* and here we have the accomplishment of that prediction. (3.) Soon after this he left his life to the resentment of his country, who it is probable, were disgusted at him for leaving them exposed to a foreign enemy while he was invading Judah; this Hoshea took advantage of, and to gain his crown seized his life, *slew him, and reigned in his stead*; sure he was found of a crown indeed that at this time would run such a mighty hazard as a traitor doth: for the crown of Israel, now it had lost the choicest of its flowers and jewels, was lined more than ever with thorns, had of late been fatal to all the heads that had worn it, was forfeited to divine justice, and now ready to be laid in the dust, a crown which a wife man would not have taken up in the street, yet Hoshea not only ventures upon it, but ventures for it; and it cost him dear.

32. ¶ In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel, began Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign. 33. Five and twenty years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok. 34. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD: he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done. 35. ¶ Howbeit, the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burnt incense still in the high places: he built the higher gate of the house of the LORD. 36. ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 37. (In those days the LORD began to send against Judah, Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah.) 38. And Jotham slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father, and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

We have here a short account of the reign of Jotham king of Judah, of whom we are told,

1. That he reigned very well, *did that which was right in the sight of the Lord*, ver. 34. Josephus gives him a very high character, that he was pious towards God, just towards men, and laid out himself for the public good; that whatever was amiss, he took care to have it rectified; and, in short, wanted no virtue that became a good prince. Though the high places were not taken away, yet to draw people from them, and keep them close to God's holy place, he shewed great respect to the temple, and built the higher gate which he went through to the temple. If magistrates cannot do all they would for the suppressing of vice and profaneness, let them do so much the more for the support and advancement of piety and virtue, and bringing of them into reputation. If they cannot pull down the high places of sin, yet let them build and beautify the high gate of God's house.

2. That he died in the midst of his days, ver. 33. Of most of the kings of Judah we are told how old they were when they began their reign, and by that may compute how old they were when they died; but no account is kept of the age of any of the kings of Israel (that I remember) only of the years of their reigns. This honour God would put upon the kings of the house of David above those of other families. And by these accounts it appears there was none of all the kings of Judah that reached David's age, seventy; the common age of man. Aha's age I do not find, Uzziah lived to be sixty-eight, Manasseh sixty-seven, and Jehoshaphat sixty; and those were the three eldest; many of them that were of note, did not reach fifty. This Jotham here died at forty-one. He was too great a blessing to be continued long to such an unworthy people. His death was a judgment, especially considering the character of his son and successor.

3. That in his days the confederacy was formed against Judah by Rezin and Remaliah's son, the king of Syria, and the king of Israel, which ap-

peared so very formidable in the beginning of the reign of Ahaz, that upon notice of it, the heart of that prince was moved, and the heart of the people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind, *Ira. vii. 2.* The confederates were unjust in the attempt, yet it is here said, ver. 37. *The Lord began to send them against Judah*, as he bid Shimei curse David, and took away from Job what the Sabeans robbed him of. Men are God's hand, the sword the rod in his hand, which he makes use of as he pleaseth, to serve his own righteous counsels, though men be unrighteous in their intentions. This storm gathered in the reign of pious Jotham, but he came to his grave in peace, and it fell upon his degenerate son.

CHAP. XVI.

This chapter is wholly taken up with the reign of Ahaz: and we have even enough of it, unless it were better. He had a good father, and a better son, and yet wash himself one of the worst of the kings of Judah. (1.) He was a notorious idolater, ver. 1—4. (2.) With the treasures of the temple, as well as his own, he hired the king of Assyria to invade Syria and Israel, ver. 5—9. (3.) He took pattern from an idol's altar they saw at Damascus for a new altar in God's temple; ver. 10—16. (4.) He abused and embezzled the furniture of the temple, ver. 17, 18. And so his story ends, ver. 19, 20.

1. IN the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign. 2. Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD his God, like David his father. 3. But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel. 4. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

We have here a general character of the reign of Ahaz, few and evil were his days; few, for he died at thirty-six; evil, for we are here told,

1. That he *did not that which was right, like David*, ver. 2. *i. e.* He had none of that concern and affection for the instituted service and worship of God, which David was famous for. He had no love for the temple, made no conscience of his duty to God, nor had any regard to his law. Herein he was unlike David, it was his honour that he was of the house and lineage of David, and it was owing to God's ancient covenant with David, that he was now upon the throne, which aggravated his wickedness, that he was a reproach to that honourable name and family, which therefore was really a reproach to him; (*Degeneranti genius opprobrium*) and that though he enjoyed the benefit of David's piety, he did not tread in the steps of it.

2. That he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, ver. 3. who all worshipped calves. He was not joined in any affinity to them, as Joram and Ahaziah, were with the house of Ahab, but *ex mero motu*, without any instigation walked in their way. The kings of Israel pleaded policy and reasons of state for their idolatry, but Ahaz had no such pretence, in him it was the most unreasonable impolitic thing that could be. They were his enemies, and had proved enemies to themselves too by their idolatry, yet he walked in their way.

3. That he *made his sons to pass through the fire* to the honour of his dung-hill deities. He burnt them; so it is expressly said of him, *2 Chron. xxviii. 3.* burnt some of them, and perhaps made others of them, (Hezekiah himself not excepted, though afterwards he was never the worse for it) to pass between two fires, or be drawn through a flame, in token of their dedication to the idol.

5. That he did according to the abomination of the heathen whom the Lord had cast out. It was an instance of his great folly, that he would be guided by those in his religion, and follow them whom he saw fallen into the ditch before his eyes; and of his great impiety, that he would conform to those usages which God had declared to be abominable to him; and set himself to write after the copy of those whom God had cast out, thus walking directly contrary to God.

5. That he sacrificed in the high places, ver. 4. If his father had but zeal enough to take them away, it might have prevented the debauching of his sons: But they that connive at sin, know not what dangerous snares they lay for those that come after them. He forsook God's house, was weary of that place where, in his father's time, he had often been detained before the Lord, and performed his devotions on high hills, where he had a better prospect, and under green trees, where he had a more pleasant shade. It was a religion little worth, which was guided by fancy, not by faith.

5. ¶ Then Rezin king of Syria, and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him. 6. At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day. 7. So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me. 8. And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria. 9. And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

Here is, 1. The attempt of his confederate neighbours the kings of Syria and Israel upon him. They thought to have made themselves masters of Jerusalem, and to have a set a king of their own in it, *Ira. vii. 6.* in that they fell short, but the king of Syria recovered Elath, a considerable port upon the Red Sea, which Amaziah had taken from the Syrians, *ch. p. xiv. 22.* What

What can they keep that have lost their religion? Let them expect thenceforward to be always on the losing hand.

2. His project to get clear of him. Having forsaken God, he had neither courage nor strength to make head against his enemies, nor could he with any boldness ask help of God, but he made his court to the king of Assyria, and got him to come in for his relief. They, whose hearts condemn them, will go any whither in a day of distress, rather than to God. Was it because there was not a God in Israel, that he sent to the Assyrian for help? Was the rock of ages removed out of its place, that he stayed himself on this broken reed? The seed itself was its own punishment; for though it is true he gained his point, the king of Assyria hearkened to him, and to serve his own turn made a descent upon Damascus, whereby he gave a powerful diversion to the king of Syria, ver. 9. and obliged him to let fall his design against Ahaz, carrying the Syrians captive to Kir, as Amos had expressly foretold, chap. i. 5. yet considering all, he made but an ill bargain, for to compass this,

(1.) He enslaved himself, ver. 7. *I am thy servant and thy son, i. e. I will be as dutiful and obedient to thee as to a master or father, if thou wilt but do me this good turn.* Had he thus humbled himself to God, and implored his favour, he might have been delivered upon easier terms, might have saved his money, and needed only to have parted with his sins: but if the prodigal out-run his father's house, he soon becomes a slave to the worst of masters.

(2.) He impoverished himself, for he took the silver and gold that was laid up in the treasury both of the temple and of the kingdom, and sent it to the king of Assyria, ver. 8. Both Church and state must be squeezed and exhausted, to gratify this his new patron and guardian. I know not what authority he had thus to dispose of the public stock; but it is common for those that have brought themselves into straits by one sin, to help themselves out by another; and those that have alienated themselves from God, will make no difficulty of alienating any other of his rights.

10. ¶ And king Ahaz went to Damascus, to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest, the fashion of the altar and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof. 11. And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made it, against king Ahaz came from Damascus. 12. And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon. 13. And he burnt his burnt-offering and his meat-offering, and poured his drink offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace-offerings upon the altar, 14. And he brought also the brazen altar which was before the LORD, from the fore-front of the house, from between the altar and the house of the LORD, And put it on the north side of the altar. 15. And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt-offering, and the evening meat-offering, and the king's burnt sacrifice, and his meat-offering with the burnt-offering of all the people of the land, and their meat-offering and their drink-offerings, and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt-offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice: and the brazen altar shall be for me to enquire by. 16. Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.

Though Ahaz had himself sacrificed in high places, on hills, and under every green tree, ver. 4. yet God's altar had hitherto continued in its place, and in use, and the king's burnt-offering, and his meat-offering, ver. 15. had been offered upon it by the priests that attended it; but here we have it taken away by wicked Ahaz, and another altar, an idolatrous one, put in the room of it: a bolder stroke than the work of the kings had yet given to religion. We have here,

4. The model of this new altar, taken from one at Damascus, by the king himself, ver. 10. The king of Assyria having taken Damascus, thither Ahaz went to congratulate his success, to return him thanks for the kindness he had done him by this expedition, and as his servant and son to receive his commands. Had he been faithful to his God, he had not needed to have sneaked thus to foreign power. At Damascus, either in his viewing of the rarities of the place, or rather his joining with them in their devotions, (for when he was there he thought it no harm to do as they there did) he saw an altar that pleased his fancy extremely, not such a plain old fashioned one as that which he had been trained up at an attendance upon at Jerusalem, but curiously carved, it is likely, and adorned with image-work, many pretty odd things were about it, which were significant he thought, surprising and very charming, and apt to excite his devotion. Solomon had but a dull fancy, he thinks, compared with the ingenious artist that made this altar. Nothing will serve him but he must have an altar just like this; a pattern of it must be taken immediately; he cannot stay till he returns himself, but sends it before him in all haste, with orders to Urijah the priest to get one made exactly to this model, and have it ready against he came home. The pattern God shewed to Moses in the mount, or to David by the Spirit, was not comparable to this pattern sent from Damascus. The hearts of idolaters, walking after their eyes, which are therefore said to go a whoring after their idols, but the true worshippers worship the true God by faith.

2. The making of it by Urijah the priest, ver. 11. This Urijah, it is likely, was the chief priest, who at this time presided in the temple service. To him Ahaz sent an intimation of his mind, (for we read not of any express orders he gave him) to get an altar made by this pattern. And without any dispute or objection he let it a doing presently, being perhaps as fond of it as the king was, at least being very willing to humour the king, and desirous to curry favour with him. Perhaps he might have this excuse for gratifying the king herein, that by this means he might keep him to the temple at Jerusalem, and prevent his total deserting it for the high places and the groves. Let us oblige him in this, (thinks Urijah) and then he will bring all his sacrifices to us; for by this craft we get our living. But whatever pretence he had, it was a most base wicked thing for him that was a priest, a chief priest, to make this altar in compliance with an idolatrous prince. For hereby, (1.) He prostituted his authority, and profaned the crown of his priesthood, making himself a servant to the lusts of men. There is not

a greater disgrace to the ministry, than obsequiousness to such wicked commands as this was. (2.) He betrayed his trust. As priest, he was bound to maintain and defend God's institutions, and to oppose and witness against all innovations; and for him to assist and serve the king, in setting up an altar to confront the altar which by divine appointment he was consecrated to minister at, was such a piece of treachery and perfidiousness, as may justly render him infamous to all posterity. Had he only connived at the doing of it, had he been sighted into it by menaces, had he endeavoured to dissuade the king from it, or but delay the doing of it till he came home, that he might first talk to him about it, it had not been so bad; but so willingly to walk after his commandment, as if he were glad of the opportunity to oblige him, was such an affront to the God he served, as was utterly inexcusable.

3. The dedicating of it. Urijah perceiving that the king's heart was much upon it, took care to have it ready against he came down, and set it near the brazen altar, but somewhat lower and farther from the door of the temple. The king was wonderfully pleased with it, approached to it with all possible veneration, and offered thereon his burnt-offering, &c. ver. 12, 13. His sacrifices were not offered to the God of Israel, but to the gods of Damascus, as we find 2 Chron. xxviii. 23. and when he borrowed the Syrians altar, no marvel he borrowed their gods. Naaman the Syrian embraced the God of Israel, when he got earth from the land of Israel to make an altar of.

4. The removal of God's altar to make room for it. Uzziah was so modest, that he put this altar at the lower end of the court, and left God's altar in its place, *between him and the house of the Lord*, ver. 14. But that would not satisfy Ahaz, he removed God's altar to an obscure corner, in the north side of the court, and put his own before the sanctuary, in the place of it. He thinks his new altar is much more stately, and much more sightly and shames that, and therefore let that be laid aside, as a vessel in which there was no pleasure. His superstitious invention at first jostled with, but at length jostled out God's sacred institution. Note, Those will soon come to make nothing of God, that will not be contented to make him their all. Ahaz durst not (perhaps for fear of the people) quite demolish the brazen altar, and knock it to pieces; but while he ordered all the sacrifices to be offered upon his new altar, ver. 15. *The brazen altar* (saith he) *shall be for me to enquire by.* Having thrust it out from the use for which it was instituted, which was to sanctify the gifts offered upon it, he pretends to advance it above its institution, which it is common for superstitious people to do. The altar was never designed for an oracle, yet Ahaz will have it for that use. The Romish church seemingly magnifies Christ's sacraments, yet wretchedly corrupts them. But some give another sense of Ahab's purpose; as for the brazen altar I will consider what to do with it, and give orders about it. The Jews say, that afterwards of the braze of it he made that famous dial, which was called *the dial of Ahaz*, chap. xx. 11. The base compliance of the poor spirited-priest, with the presumptuous usurpations of an ill-spirited king is again taken notice of, ver. 16. *Urijah the priest did according to all that king Ahaz commanded.* Miserable is the case of great men, when those that should reprove them for their sins, strengthen and serve them in their sins.

17. ¶ And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them, and took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones. 18. And the covert for the sabbath day they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the LORD, for the king of Assyria. 19. ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz, which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 20. And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David, and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

Here is, 1. Ahaz abusing the temple; not the building itself, but some of the furniture of it. 1. He defaced the bases on which the lavers were set, 1 Kings vii. 28, 29. and down took the molten sea, ver. 17. These the priests used for washing, at them therefore he seems to have a particular spite. It is one of the greatest prejudices that can be done to religion, to obstruct the purifying of the priests, the Lord's ministers. 2. He removed the covert from the sabbath; erected either in honour of the sabbath, or for the convenience of the priests, when on the sabbath they officiated in greater numbers than on the other days. Whatever it was, it should seem in removing it he intended to put a contempt upon the sabbath, and so to open as wide an inlet as any other to all manner of impiety. 3. The king's entry which led to the house of the Lord, for the convenience of the royal family, (perhaps that ascent which Solomon had made, and which the queen of Sheba admired, 1 Kings x. 5.) he turned another way, to shew that he did not intend to frequent the house of the Lord any more. This he did for the king of Assyria, to oblige him, who perhaps returned his visit, and found fault with this entry, as an inconvenience and disparagement to his palace. When those that have had a ready passage to the house of the Lord, to please their neighbours, turn it another way, they are going down the hill apace towards their ruin.

2. Ahaz resigning his life in the midst of his days, at thirty-six years of age, ver. 19. and leaving his kingdom to a better man, Hezekiah his son, ver. 20. who proved as much a friend to the temple, as he had been an enemy to it. Perhaps this very son he made to pass through the fire, and thereby dedicated him to Moloch; but God by his grace snatched him as a brand out of the burning.

C H A P. XVII.

This chapter gives us an account of the captivity of the ten tribes, and so finished the history of that kingdom, after it had continued about two hundred and sixty-five years from the setting up of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. In this we have, 1. A short narrative of this destruction, ver. 1—6. 2. Remarks upon it, and the causes of it, for the justifying of God in it, and for warning to others, ver. 7—23. 3. An account of the nations which succeeded them in the possession of their land, and the mongrel religion set up among them, ver. 24—41.

1. **I**N the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years. 2. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of

of Israel that were before him. 3. ¶ Against him came up Shalmanezzer king of Assyria, and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents. 4. And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison. 5. ¶ Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. 6. ¶ In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah, and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

We have here the reign and ruin of Hoshea, the last of the kings of Israel, concerning whom observe,

1. That though he forced his way to the crown by treason and murder, as we read, *chap. xv. 30.* yet he gained not the possession of it till seven or eight years after; for it was in the fourth year of Ahaz that he slew Pekah, but did not himself begin to reign till the twelfth year of Ahaz, *ver. 1.* Whether by the king of Assyria, or by the king of Judah, or by some of his own people, doth not appear, but it seems so long he was kept out of the throne he aimed at. Justly were his ill practices thus chastised, and the word of the prophet was thus fulfilled, *Hos. x. 3. Now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the Lord.*

2. That though he was bad, yet not so bad as the kings of Israel that had been before him, *ver. 2.* not so doing lord of the calves as they had been. One of them, that at Dan, the Jews say, had been before this carried away by the king of Assyria in that expedition, *chap. xv. 29.* to which perhaps, the prophet refers, *Hos. viii. 5. The calf, O Samaria, has cast thee off; which made him put the less confidence in the other.* And some say, that Hoshea took off the embargo which the former kings had put their subjects under, forbidding them to go up to Jerusalem to worship, which he permitted those to do that had a mind to it. But what shall we think of this dispensation of providence, that the destruction of the kingdom of Israel should come in the reign of one of the best of its kings? *Thy judgments, O God, are a great deep.* God would hereby shew, that in bringing this ruin upon them, he designed to punish, (1.) Not only the sins of that generation, but of the foregoing ages, and to reckon for the iniquity of their fathers, who had been long in filling the measure, and treasuring up wrath against this day of wrath. (2.) Not only the sins of their kings, but the sins of the people. If Hoshea was not so bad as the former kings, yet the people were as bad as those that went before them, and it was an aggravation of their badness, and brought ruin the sooner, that their king did not set them so ill an example as the former kings had done, nor hinder them from reforming; he gave them leave to do better, but they did as bad as ever, which laid the blame of their sin and ruin wholly upon themselves.

3. That the destruction came gradually. They were for sometime made tributaries, before they were made captives to the king of Assyria, *ver. 3.* and if the lesser judgment had prevailed to humble and reform them, the greater had been prevented.

4. That they brought it upon themselves by the indirect course they took to shake off the yoke of the king of Assyria, *ver. 4.* Had the king and people of Israel applied themselves to God, made their peace with him, and their prayers to him, they might have recovered their liberty, ease and honour; but they withheld their tribute, and trusted to the king of Egypt to assist them in their revolt, which, if it had taken effect, had been but to change their oppressors; but Egypt became to them the staff of a broken reed. This provoked the king of Assyria to proceed against them with the more severity. Men get nothing by struggling with the net, but intangle themselves the more.

5. That it was an utter destruction that came upon them.

(1.) The king of Israel was made a prisoner; he was that up and bound; being it is probable taken by surprise, before Samaria was besieged.

(2.) The land of Israel was made a prey. The army of the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and made themselves masters of it, *ver. 5.* and using them as traitors punished with the sword of justice, rather than as fair enemies.

(3.) The royal city of Israel was besieged, and at length taken. Three years it held out, after the country was conquered, and, no doubt, a great deal of misery they endured in that time which is not particularly recorded, but the very brevity of the story, and the passing of this matter over lightly, methinks, intimates they were abandoned of God, and he did not now regard the affliction of Israel as sometimes he had done.

(4.) The people of Israel were carried captives into Assyria, *ver. 6.* The generality of the people, those that were of any note, were forced away into the conqueror's country, to be slaves and beggars there. 1. Thus he was pleased to exercise a dominion over them, and to shew that they were entirely at his disposal. 2. By depriving them of their possessions and estates, real and personal, and exposing them to all the hardships and reproaches of a remove to a strange country, under the power of an imperious army, he chastised them for their rebellion, and their endeavour to shake off his yoke, 3. Thus he effectually prevented all such like attempts for the future, and secured their own country to himself. 4. Thus he got the benefit of their services in his own country, as Pharaoh did that of their fathers; and so this unworthy people were lost as they were found, and ended as they began, in servitude, and under oppression. 5. Thus he made room for those of his own country, that had little, and little to do at home, and settle in a good land, and a land flowing with milk and honey. All these several ways, he served himself by the captivity of the ten tribes. We are here told in what places of his kingdom he disposed of them, in Halah and Habor, in places we may suppose, far distant from each other, lest they should keep up a correspondence, incorporate again, and become formidable. There, we have reason to think, after some time, they were so mingled with the nations, that they were lost, and the name of Israel was no more in remembrance. They that forgot God, were themselves forgotten; and they that studied to be like the nations, were buried amongst them; and they that would not serve God in their own land, were made to serve their enemies in a strange land. It is likely, they were the men of honour and estates that were carried captive, and that many of the meaner sort of people were left behind, many of every tribe, who either went over to Judah, or became subject to the Assyrian colonies, and the posterity were Galileans, or Samaritans. But thus ended Israel as a nation; now they became *Lo-ammi*, not a people; and *Lo-rumah*, unpitied. Now Canaan sued them out. When we read their entry under Hoshea the son of Nun, who would have thought that as such this should have been their exit under Hoshea the son of

Elah? Thus Rome's glory in Augustus, sunk many ages after in Augustulus. Providence so ordered the eclipsing of the honour of the ten tribes, that the honour of Judah the royal tribe, and Levi the holy tribe, which yet remained, might shine the brighter. Yet we find a number sealed of each of the twelve tribes, *Rev. vii.* except Dan. James writes to the twelve tribes scattered abroad, *Jam. i. 1.* and Paul speaks of the twelve tribes which *instantly served God day and night*, *Acts xxvi. 7.* So that though we never read of the return of those that were carried captive, nor have any reason to credit the conjecture of some that they yet remain a distinct body in some remote corner of the world; yet a remnant of them did escape, to keep up the name of Israel, till it came to be worn by the gospel-church, the spiritual Israel, in which it will ever remain, *Gal. vi. 16.*

7. For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, 8. And walked in the statutes of the heathen, (whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel) and of the kings of Israel which they had made. 9. And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right, against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen, to the fenced city. 10. And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree: 11. And there they burnt incense in all high-places, as did the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them: and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger. 12. For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing. 13. Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments, and my statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. 14. Notwithstanding, they would not hear but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God. 15. And they rejected the statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them, and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them. 16. And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made their molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. 17. And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. 18. Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only. 19. Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel, which they made. 20. And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight. 21. For he rent Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king, and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin. 22. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did, they departed not from them. 23. Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

Though the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes was but briefly related, it is in these verses largely commented upon by our historian, and the reasons of it assigned, not taken from the second causes, the weaknets of Israel, and their impolitic management, the strength and growing greatness of the Assyrian monarch, these things are overlooked; but only from the first cause.

(1.) It was the Lord that removed Israel out of his sight: whoever were the instruments, he was the author of this calamity: It was destruction from the Almighty; the Assyrians was but the rod of his anger, *Isa. x. 5.* It was the Lord that rejected the seed of Israel, else their enemies could not have seized upon them, *ver. 20.* Who gave Jacob to the spoil, and Israel to the robbers? Did not the Lord? *Isa. xlvii. 24.* We lose the benefit of national judgments, if we do not eye the hand of God in them, and the fulfilling of the scripture; for that also is taken notice of here, *ver. 3.* The Lord removed Israel out of his favour, and out of their own land, as he had said by all his servants the prophets; rather shall heaven and earth pass, than one tittle of God's word fall to the ground. When God's word and his works are compared, it will be found not only that they agree, but that they illustrate each other. But why would God ruin a people that were raised and incorporated, as Israel was, by miracles and oracles? Why would he undo that which himself had done at so vast an expence? Was it purely an act of sovereignty? No, it was an act of necessary justice. For,

(2.) They provoked him to do this by their wickedness. Was it God's doing? Nay, it was their own, their way and their doings procured all this to themselves, and it was their own wickedness that did corrupt them? this the sacred historian shews here at large, that it might appear God did them no wrong

wrong, and that others might hear and fear; come and see what it was that did all this mischief, that broke their power and laid their honour in dust, it was sin, that and nothing else separated between them and God, that is here very movingly laid open as the cause of all the desolations of Israel. He here shews.

1. What God had done for Israel to engage them to serve him. (1.) He gave them their liberty, *ver. 7. he brought them from under the hand of Pharaoh, who oppressed them, asserted their freedom, Israel is my son, and effected their freedom with a high hand, thus they were bound in duty and gratitude to be his servants, for he had loosed their bond; nor would he that rescued them out of the hand of the king of Egypt have contradicted himself so far as to deliver them into the hand of the king of Assyria as he did, if they had not by their iniquity betrayed their liberty and sold themselves.* (2.) He gave them their law, and was himself their king, they were immediately under a divine regimen, they could not plead ignorance of good and evil, sin and duty, for God had particularly charged them against those very things which here he chargeth them with, *ver. 15. That they should not do like the heathen; nor could they be in any doubt concerning their obligation to observe this charge, for they were the commandments and statutes of the Lord their God, ver. 13. so that no room were left to dispute whether they should keep them or no; he had not dealt so with other nations, Psal. cxlvii. 19, 20.* (3.) He gave them their land, for he cast out the heathen from before them, (*ver. 8.*) to make room for them, and the casting out of them for their idolatries was as fair a warning as could be given to Israel not to do like them.

2. What they had done against God, notwithstanding these engagements as he had laid upon them.

(1.) In general, they sinned against the Lord their God, *ver. 7. they did those things that were not right, ver. 9. but secretly, so wedded were they to their evil practices, that when they could not do them publicly, could not for shame, or could not for fear, they would do them secretly: an instance of their atheism, that they thought what was done in secret was from under the eye of God himself, and would not be required.* Again, they wrought wicked things in such a direct contradiction to the divine law, that it seemed as if it were done on purpose to provoke the Lord to anger, *ver. 11. in contempt of his authority and defiance of his justice. They rejected God's statutes, and covenant, ver. 15. would not be bound up either by his command or the consent they themselves had given to the covenant, but threw off the obligations of both, and therefore God justly rejected them, ver. 20. See Hos. iv. 6. They left all the commandments of the Lord their God, ver. 16. left the way, left the work which these commandments prescribed them and directed them in; nay, lastly, they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, i. e. they wholly addicted themselves to sin, as slaves to the service of those to whom they are sold, and by their obstinate persisting in sin so hardened their own hearts, that at length it was become morally impossible for them to recover themselves, as one that has sold himself has put his liberty past recall.*

(2.) In particular, though they were guilty (no doubt) of many immoralities, and violated all the commands of the second table, yet nothing is herein instanced but their idolatry, that was the sin that did most easily beset them, that was of all other most provoking to God, it was the spiritual adultery that broke the marriage covenant, and was the inlet of all other wickedness; this is again and again mentioned here as the sin that ruined them.

(1.) They feared other gods, *ver. 7. i. e. worshipped them, and paid their homage to them, as if they feared their displeasure.* (2.) They walked in the statutes of the heathen, which were contrary to God's statutes, *ver. 8. did as did the heathen, ver. 11. went after the heathen that were round about them, ver. 15. so prostituting the honour of their peculiarity, and defeating God's design concerning them, which was, that they should be distinguished from the heathen; must they that were taught of God go to school to the heathen? They that were appropriated to God, take their measures from the nations that were abandoned by him?* (3.) They walked in the statutes of the idolatrous kings of Israel, *ver. 8. in all the sins of Jeroboam, ver. 22. When their kings assumed a power to alter and add to the divine institutions, they submitted to them, and thought the command of their kings would bear them out in disobedience to the command of their God.* (4.) They built them high places in all their cities, *ver. 9. if it were but the tower of the watchmen, a country and town, that had no walls, but only a tower to shelter the watch in time of danger, or but a lodge for shepherds, it must be honoured with a high place, and that with an altar; if it were a fenced city, it must be farther fortified with a high place; having forsaken God's holy place they know no end of high places, in which every man followed his own fancy, and directed his devotion to what God he pleased; sacred things were hereby profaned and laid common, when their altars were as heaps in the furrows of the field, Hos. xii. 11.* (5.) They set them up images and groves, Asherim, even wooden images, so some think that should be rendered which we translate groves; or Asherah, so others, *ver. 10. directly contrary to the second commandment; they served idols, ver. 12. the works of their own hands, and creatures of their own fancy, though God had warned them particularly not to do this thing.* (6.) They burnt incense in all the high places to the honour of strange gods, for it was to the dishonour of the true God, *ver. 11.* (7.) They followed vanity; idols are called so, because they could do neither good nor evil, were the most insignificant things that could be, they that worshipped were like unto them, and so they became vain and good for nothing, *ver. 16. vain in their devotions, which were brutish and ridiculous, and so became vain in their whole conversation.* (8.) Besides the molten images, even the two calves, they worshipped all the host of heaven, the sun, moon and stars, for it is not meant of the heavenly host of angels, they could not rise so far above sensible things as to think of them; and withal they served Baal, the deified heroes of the Gentiles, *ver. 16.* (9.) They caused their children to pass through the fire, in token of their dedicating of them to their idols; and lastly, they used divinations and enchantments, that they might receive directions from the gods to whom they paid their devotions.

3. What means God used with them to bring them off from their idolatries, and to how little purpose; he testified against them, shewed them their sins, and warned them of the fatal consequences of them by all the prophets and all the seers (for so the prophets had been formerly called) and had pressed them to turn from their evil ways, *ver. 13. We have read of prophets more or less in every reign; though they had forsaken God's family of priests, he did not leave them without a succession of prophets that made it their business to teach them the good knowledge of the Lord, but all in vain, ver. 14. they would not hear, but hardened their neck, persisted in their idolatries; and were like their fathers, that would not bow their necks to God's yoke because they did not believe in him, did not receive his truths, nor would venture upon his promises: it seems to refer to their fathers in the wilderness, the same sin that kept them out of Canaan turned these out, and that was unbelief.*

4. How God punished them for their sins; he was very angry with them, *ver. 18. for in the matter of his worship he is a jealous God, and resents nothing more bitterly than giving that honour to any creature which is due to him only; he afflicted them, (ver. 20.) and delivered them into the hand of*

spoilers in the days of the judges and of Saul, and afterwards in the days of most of their kings, to see if they would be awakened by the judgments of God to consider and amend their ways; but when all these corrections did not prevail to drive out the folly, God first rent Israel from the house of David, under which they might have been happy; as Judah was hereby weakened, so Israel was hereby corrupted, for they made one king that drove them from following the Lord, and made them sin a great sin, *ver. 21. this was a national judgment, and the punishment of their former idolatries; and at length he removed them quite out of his sight, ver. 18—23. without giving them any hopes of a return out of their captivity.*

Lastly, Here is a complaint against Judah in the midst of all, *ver. 19. Also Judah kept not the commandments of God; though they were not quite so bad as Israel, yet they walked in the statutes of Israel, and this aggravated the sin of Israel, that they communicated the infection of it to Judah, see Ezek. xxiii. 11. Those that bring sin into a country or family, bring a plague into it, and will be to answer for all the mischief that follows.*

24. ¶ And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria, instead of the children of Israel; and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof. 25. And so it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew some of them. 26. Whereas they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land. 27. Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom ye brought from thence, and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land. 28. Then one of the priests, whom they had carried away from Samaria, came and dwelt in Beth-el, and taught them how they should fear the LORD. 29. Howbeit, every nation made gods of their own, and put them in the houses of the high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt. 30. And the men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima. 31. And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burnt their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech the gods of Sepharvaim. 32. So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places. 33. They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations, whom they carried away from thence. 34. Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel; 35. With whom the LORD had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them: 36. But the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and stretched-out arm, him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice. 37. And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment which he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore, and ye shall not fear other gods. 38. And the covenant that I have made with you, ye shall not forget, neither shall ye fear other gods. 39. But the LORD your God ye shall fear, and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies. 40. Howbeit, they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner. 41. So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their childrens children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.

Never was land lost (we say) for want of an heir. When the children of Israel were dispossessed and turned out of Canaan, the king of Assyria soon transplanted thither the supernumeraries of his own country, such as it could well spare, who should be servants to him, and masters to the Israelites that remained; and here we have an account of these new inhabitants, whose story is related here that we may take our leave of Samaria; as also of the Israelites that were carried captive into Assyria.

1. Concerning the Assyrians that were brought into the land of Israel we are here told,

(1.) They that possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof, *ver. 24. It is common for lands to change their owners, but sad that the holy land should become a heathen land again; see what work sin makes.*

(2.) That at their first coming God sent lions among them; it is probable, they were not enough to people the country, which occasioned the beasts of the field to multiply against them, *Exod. xxiii. 29. yet besides the natural cause there was a manifest hand of God in it, who is Lord of hosts, of all the creatures, and can serve his own purposes by which he pleaseth, little or big, lice or lions; God ordered them this rough welcome to check their pride and insolence, and to let them know, that though they had conquered Israel, the God of Israel had power enough to deal with them, that he could have prevented*

prevented their settling here by ordering lions into the service of Israel, and that he permitted it not for their righteousness, but the wickedness of his own people, and that they were now under his visitation; they had lived without God in their own land and were not plagued with lions, but if they do so in this land it is at their peril.

(3.) That they sent a remonstrance of this grievance to the king their master, setting forth, it is likely, the loss their infant colonies had sustained by the lions, and the continual fear they were in of them, that they looked upon it to be a judgment upon them for not worshipping the God of the land, which they could not because they knew not how, *ver. 26*. The God of Israel was the God of the whole world, but they ignorantly call him the God of the land, apprehending themselves therefore within his reach, and concerned to be upon good terms with him, herein they shamed the Israelites, who were not so ready to hear the voice of God's judgments as they were, and who had not served the God of that land, though he was the God of their fathers, and their great benefactor, and though they were well instructed in the manner of his worship; Assyrians beg to be taught that which Israelites hated to be taught.

4. That the king of Assyria took care to have them taught the manner of the God of the land, *ver. 27, 28*. not out of any affection to that God, but to save his subjects from the lions. On this errand he sent back one of the priests whom he had carried away captive, a prophet would have done them more good, for this was but one of the priests of the calves, and therefore chose to dwell at Bethel for old acquaintance sake, and though he might teach them to do better than they did, he was not likely to teach them to do well, unless he had taught his own people better, however he came and dwelt among them, to teach them how they should fear the Lord, whether he taught them out of the book of the law, or only by word of mouth, is uncertain.

5. That being thus taught they made a mongrel religion of it, worshipped the God of Israel for fear, and their own idols for love, *ver. 33*. They feared the Lord, but they served their own gods; they all agreed to worship the God of the land, according to the manner, to observe the Jewish festivals and rites of sacrificing, but every nation made gods of their own belide, not only for their private use in their own families, but to be put in the houses of their high places, *ver. 29*. The idols of each country are here named, *ver. 30, 31*. The learned are at a loss for the signification of several of these names, and cannot agree by what representations these gods were worshipped. If we may credit the traditions of the Jewish doctors, they tell us, that Succoth-Benoth was worshipped in a hen and chickens, Nergal in a cock, Ashima in a smooth goat, Nibhaz in a dog, Tartak in an ass, Adramelech in a peacock, Anammelech in a pheasant. Our own tell us more probably, That Succoth-Benoth, signifying the tents of the daughters, this was Venus; Nergal being worshipped by the Cushites or Persians, was the fire; Adramelech and Anammelech were only distinctions of Moloch; see how vain idolaters were in their imaginations, and wonder at their foolishness. Our very ignorance concerning these idols teacheth us the accomplishment of that word which God has spoken, that these false gods should all perish, *Jer. x. 11*. they are all buried in oblivion, while the name of the true God shall continue for ever.

This medley superstition is here said to continue unto this day, *ver. 41*. till the time when this book was written, and long after, above three hundred years in all, till the time of Alexander the Great, when Manassah, brother to Jaddus the high priest of the Jews, having married the daughter of Sanballat, governor of the Samaritans, went over to them, got leave of Alexander to build a temple in mount Gerizim, drew over many of the Jews to him, and prevailed with the Samaritans to cast away all their idols, and to worship the God of Israel only, yet their worship was mixed with so much superstition, that our Saviour tells them they knew not what they worshipped, *John iv. 22*.

2. Concerning the Israelites that were carried into the land of Assyria; the historian has occasion to speak of them, *ver. 33*. shewing that their successors in the land did as they had done, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away, they worshipped both the God of Israel and those other gods; but what did the captives do in the land of their affliction? Were they reformed and brought to repentance by their troubles? No, they do after the former manner, *ver. 34*. When the two tribes were afterwards carried into Babylon, and were cured by it of their idolatry, and therefore after seventy years they were brought back with joy, but the ten tribes were hardened in the furnace, and therefore were justly lost in it, and left to perish.

This obstinacy of their's is here aggravated by the consideration, (1.) Of the honour God had put upon them, as the seed of Jacob, whom he named Israel, and from him they were so named, but were a reproach to that worthy name by which they were called. (2.) Of the covenant he made with them, and the charge he gave them upon that covenant, which is here very fully recited, that they should fear and serve the Lord Jehovah only, who had brought them up out of Egypt, *ver. 36*. That having received his statutes and ordinances in writing, they should observe to do them for evermore, *ver. 37*. and never forget that covenant which God had made with them, the promises and conditions of that covenant, especially that great article of it which is here thrice repeated, because it had been so often inculcated and so much insisted on that they should not fear other gods, he had told them that if they kept close to him he would deliver them out of the hand of all their enemies, *ver. 39*. yet when they were in the hand of their enemies, and stood in need of deliverance, they were so stupid, and had so little sense of their own interest, that they did after the former manner, *ver. 40*. they served both the true God and false gods, as if they knew no difference. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone, so they did, and so did the nations that succeeded them; well might the apostle ask, *What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise, for both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin*, *Rom. iii. 9*.

C H A P. XVIII.

When the prophet had condemned Ephraim for lies and deceit, he comforted himself with this, that Judah yet ruled with God, and was faithful with the most holy, *Hos. xi. 12*. It was a very melancholy view which the last chapter gave us of the desolations of Israel, but this chapter shews us the affairs of Judah in a good posture at the same time, that it may appear God has not quite cast off the seed of Abraham, *Rom. xi. 1*. Hezekiah is here upon the throne, (1.) Reforming his kingdom, *ver. 1—6*. (2.) Prospering in all his undertakings, *ver. 7, 8*. and this at the same time when the ten tribes were led captive, *ver. 9—12*. (3.) Yet invaded by Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, *ver. 13*. His country put under contribution, *ver. 14—16*. Jerusalem besieged, *ver. 17*. God blasphemed, himself reviled, and his people solicited to revolt in a virulent speech made by Rabshakeh, *ver. 18—37*. but how well it ended, and how

much to the honour and comfort of our great reformer, we shall find in the next chapter.

1. NOW it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign. 2. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem: his mother's name also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah. 3. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did. 4. ¶ He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brasen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. 5. He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. 6. For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses. 7. And the LORD was with him, and he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not. 8. He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

We have here a general account of the reign of Hezekiah, it appears by comparing his age with his father's, that he was born when his father was about eleven or twelve years old, divine providence so ordering that he might be of full age, and fit for business then, when the measure of his father's iniquity should be full. Here is,

1. His great piety, which was the more wonderful, because his father was very wicked and vile, one of the worst of the kings, yet he one of the best, which may intimate to us, (1.) That what good there is in any, it is not of nature but of grace, free grace, sovereign grace, which, contrary to nature, grafts into the good olive, that which was wild by nature, *Rom. xi. 24*. (2.) That, that grace gets over the greatest difficulties and disadvantages; Ahaz, it is likely, gave his son a bad education as well as a bad example; Urijah, his priest, perhaps, had the tuition of him; his attendants and companions, we may suppose, such as were addicted to idolatry, and yet Hezekiah became eminently good; when God's grace will work, what can hinder it?

(1.) He was a genuine son of David, though he had a great many degenerate ones, *ver. 3*. He did that which was right, according to all that David his father did, with whom the covenant was made, and therefore was entitled to the benefit of it; we have read of some of them who did that which was right, but not like David, *chap. xiv. 3*. they did not love God's ordinances, nor cleave to them so as he did, but Hezekiah was a second David, had such a love for God's word and God's house as he had; let us not be frightened with an apprehension of the continual decay of virtue, as if, when times and men are bad, they must needs of course grow worse and worse; that doth not follow, for after many bad kings, God raised up one that was like David himself.

(2.) He was a zealous reformer of his kingdom, and as we find, *2 Chron. xxxix. 3*. he began betimes to be so, fell to work as soon as ever he came to the crown, and lost no time; he found his kingdom very corrupt, the people in all things too superstitious, they had always been so, but in the last reign worse than ever, by the influence of his wicked father, a deluge of idolatry had overspread the land, his spirit was stirred against it, we may suppose, as Paul's at Athens, while his father lived, and therefore as soon as ever he had power in his hands, he set himself to abolish it, *ver. 4*. though, considering how the people were wedded to it, he might think it could not be done without opposition.

1. The images and the groves were downright idolatrous, and of heathenish original, those he broke and destroyed; though his own father had set them up, shewed an affection for them, that should not protest them; we must never dishonour God in honour to our earthly parents.

2. The high places, though they had been sometimes used by the prophets upon special occasions, and had been hitherto conceived at by the good kings, yet because they were an affront to the temple, and a breach of the law, which required them to worship there only, and being from under the inspection of the priests, gave opportunity for the introducing of idolatrous usages; Hezekiah, who made God's word his rule, not the example of his predecessors, removed them, made a law for the removal of them, the demolishing of the chapels, tabernacles, and altars there erected, and the suppressing of the use of them, which law was put in execution with vigour; and, it is probable, the terrible judgments which the kingdom of Israel was now under for their idolatry, made Hezekiah the more zealous, and the people the more willing to comply with him; it is well when our neighbours harms are our warnings.

3. The brasen serpent was originally of divine institution, and yet, because it had been abused to idolatry, he broke it in pieces. The children of Israel had brought that with them to Canaan, where they set it up we are not told, but it seems it had been carefully preserved, as a memorial of God's goodness to their fathers in the wilderness, and a traditional evidence of the truth of that story, *Numb. xxi. 9*. for the encouragement of the sick to apply themselves to God for a cure, and of penitent sinners to apply themselves to him for mercy. But in process of time, when they began to worship the creature more than the Creator, they that would not worship images borrowed from the heathen, as some of their neighbours did, were drawn in by the tempter to burn incense to the brasen serpent, because that was made by order from God himself and had been an instrument of good to him. But Hezekiah, in his pious zeal for God's honour, not only forbade the people to worship it, but that it might never be so abused any more, he shewed the people that it was Nehushtan, nothing else but a piece of brass, and that therefore it was an idle wicked thing to burn incense to it, and then broke it to pieces; that is, as Bishop Patrick expounds it, ground it to powder, which he scattered in the air, that no fragment of it might remain. If any think the just honour of the brasen serpent was hereby diminished, they will find it abundantly made up again, *Judah iii. 13*. where our Saviour makes it a type of himself; good things, when idolized, are better parted with than kept.

(3.) Herein he was a nonfuch, *ver. 5*. none of all the kings of Judah were

were like him, *either before or after him*, two things he was eminent for in his reformation, 1. Courage and confidence in God; in abolishing idolatry, there was danger of disoblinding his subjects, and provoking them to rebel, but he trusted in the Lord God of Israel to bear him out in what he did, and save him harmless; a firm belief of God's all-sufficiency to protect and reward us, will conduce much to make us sincere, bold and vigorous in the way of our duty, like Hezekiah; when he came to the crown, he found his kingdom compassed with enemies, but he did not seek for succour to foreign aids, as his father did, but trusted the God of Israel to be the keeper of Israel. 2. Constancy and perseverance in his duty, for this there was none like him, that he clave to the Lord with a fixed resolution, and never departed from following him, ver. 6. some of his predecessors that began well fell off, but he, like Caleb, followed the Lord fully; he not only abolished all idolatrous usages, but kept God's commandments, and in every thing made conscience of his duty.

2. His great prosperity, ver. 7, 8. he was with God, and then God was with him, and having the special presence of God with him, he prospered whithersoever he went, and wonderful success in all his enterprises, in his wars, his buildings, and especially his reformation, that good work was carried on with less difficulty than he could have expected. They that do God's work with an eye to his glory, and with confidence in his strength, may expect to prosper in it; great is the truth, and will prevail. Finding himself successful, 1. He threw off the yoke of the king of Assyria, which his father had basely submitted to, this is called rebelling against him, because so the king of Assyria called it, but it was really an asserting of the just rights of his crown, which it was not in the power of Ahaz to alienate. If it was imprudently done to make this bold struggle so soon, yet I see not that it was, as some think, unjustly done; when he had thrown out the idolatry of the nations, he might well throw off the yoke of their oppression: The surest way to liberty is to serve God. 2. He made a vigorous attack upon the Philistines, and smote them even unto Gaza, both the country villages and the fortified towns, *the tower of the watchmen, and the fenced cities*, reducing those places which they had made themselves masters of in his father's time, 2 Chron. xxviii. 19. when he had purged out the corruptions his father had brought in, he might expect to recover the possessions his father had lost; of his victories over the Philistines Isaiah prophesied, chap. xiv. 28, &c.

9. ¶ And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah (which was the seventh year of Hoshea, son of Elah king of Israel) that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it. 10. And at the end of three years they took it, *even* in the sixth year of Hezekiah (that is, in the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel) Samaria was taken. 11. And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Hebor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes: 12. Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them. 13. ¶ Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah, did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them. 14. And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended, return from me: that which thou puttest on me, will I bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah, three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold. 15. And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house. 16. At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria,

The kingdom of Assyria was now grown considerable, though we never read of it till the last reign, such changes there are in the affairs of nations and families; those that have been despicable become formidable, and those, on the contrary, are brought low, that have made a mighty noise and figure. We have here an account,

(1.) Of the success of Shalmaneser king of Assyria against Israel, his besieging Samaria, ver. 9. taking it, ver. 10. and carrying the people into captivity, ver. 11. with the reason why God brought this judgment upon them, ver. 12. *Because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord their God*: this was related more largely in the chapter before, but it is here repeated, 1. As that which stirred up Hezekiah and his people, to purge out idolatry with so much zeal, because they saw the ruin which it brought upon Israel; when their neighbour's house was on fire, and their own in danger, it was time to cast away the accursed thing. 2. As that which Hezekiah much lamented, but had not strength to prevent; though the ten tribes had revolted from, and often been vexatious to the house of David, no longer ago than in his father's reign, yet being of the seed of Israel, he could not be glad at their calamities. 3. As that which laid Hezekiah and his kingdom open to the king of Assyria, and made it much more easy for him to invade him; it is said of the ten tribes here, that they would neither hear God's commandments nor do them, ver. 12. Many will be content to give God the hearing, that will give him no more, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. but these here being resolved not to do their duty, did not take care to hear it.

(2.) Of the attempt of Sennacherib the succeeding king of Assyria against Judah, in which he was encouraged by his predecessor's success against Israel, whose honour he would vie with, and whose victories he would push forward; the descent he made upon Judah was a great calamity to that kingdom, by which God would try the faith of Hezekiah, and chastise the people, who are called an hypocritical nation, Isa. x. 6. because they did not heartily comply with Hezekiah's reformation, nor willingly part with their idols, but kept them up in their hearts, and, perhaps, in their houses, though their high places were removed. Even times of reformation may prove troublous times, may be by those that oppose it, and then the blame is laid upon the reformers; this calamity will appear great upon Hezekiah, if we consider,

1. How much he lost of his country, ver. 13. The king of Assyria took all or most of the fenced cities of Judah, the frontier towns, and the garrisons, and then all the rest fell into his hands of course; the confusion

which the country was put into by this invasion is described by the prophet, Isa. x. 28—32.

2. How dear he paid for his peace; he saw Jerusalem itself in danger of falling into the enemies hand, as Samaria had done, and willing to purchase its safety at the expence, (1.) Of a mean submission, *I have offended* in denying the usual tribute, and am ready to make satisfaction as that he demanded, ver. 14. Where was Hezekiah's courage? where his confidence in God? why did he not advise with Isaiah before he sent this sneaking message? (2.) Of a vast sum of money, three hundred talents of silver and thirty of gold; not to be paid annually, but as a present ransom, above two hundred thousand pounds; to raise this sum he was forced not only to empty the public treasures, ver. 15. but to take the gold plates off from the doors of the temple, and from the pillars, ver. 16. Though the temple sanctified the gold which he had dedicated, yet the necessity being urgent, he thought he might make as bold with that as his father David, whom he took for his pattern, did with the shew-bread, and that it was neither impious nor imprudent to give a part for the preservation of the whole; his father Ahaz had plundered the temple in contempt of it, 2 Chron. xxvii. 24. he had repaid with interest what his father took, and now with all due reverence, he only begs leave to borrow it again in an exigence, and for a greater good, with a resolution to restore it in full, as soon he should be in a capacity to do it.

17. ¶ And the king of Assyria sent Tartan, and Rabsharis, and Rab-shakeh from Lachish, to king Hezekiah, with a great host against Jerusalem: and they went up and came to Jerusalem: and when they were come up, and came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the high-way of the fullers field. 18. And when they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder. 19. And Rab-shakeh said unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? 20. Thou sayest (but they are but vain words) *I have counsel and strength for the war*: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me? 21. Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, *even* upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him. 22. But if ye say unto me, We trust in the LORD our God: is not that he whose high places, and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem? 23. Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them. 24. How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? 25. Am I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it. 26. Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rab-shakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language (for we understand it) and talk not with us in the Jews language in the ears of the people that are on the wall. 27. But Rab-shakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? *hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?* 28. Then Rab-shakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria. 29. Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand; 30. Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. 31. Hearken not unto Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with my bya present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern. 32. Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil-olive, and of honey, that ye may live and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah when he persuadeth you, saying, The LORD will deliver us. 33. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? 34. Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? 35. Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand? 36. But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not. 37. Then came Eliakim

the son of Hilkiah, which *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah with *their* clothes rent, and told him the words of Rabshakeh.

Here is, 1. Jerusalem besieged by Sennacherib's army, *ver.* 17. he sent three of his great generals with a great host against Jerusalem. Is this the great king, the king of Assyria? No, never call him so, he is a base, false, perfidious man, and worthy to be made infamous to all ages; let him never be named with honour, that could do such a dishonourable thing as this, to take Hezekiah's money, which he gave him upon condition he should withdraw his army, and then, instead of quitting his country, according to the agreement, to advance against his capital city, and not send him his money again neither; those are wicked men indeed, and let them be never so great we will call them so, whose principle it is not to make themselves slaves to their word any farther than is for their interest; now Hezekiah had too much reason to repent his treaty with Sennacherib, which had made him much the poorer and never the safer.

2. Hezekiah, and his princes and people, railed upon by Rabshakeh, the chief speaker of the three generals, and that had the most satirical genius; he was instructed, no doubt, by Sennacherib what to say, who intended hereby to pick a new quarrel with Hezekiah; he had promised, upon the receipt of Hezekiah's money, to withdraw his army, and therefore cannot for shame make a forcible attack upon Jerusalem immediately, but he sends Rabshakeh to persuade Hezekiah to surrender it, and if he refuse, that shall serve him for a pretence, (and a very poor one) to besiege it, and if it hold out, to take it by storm. Rabshakeh has the impudence to desire audience of the king himself at the conduit of the upper pool, without the walls, but Hezekiah has the prudence to decline a personal treaty, and sends three commissioners, (the prime ministers of state) to hear what he had to say, but with a charge to them, not to answer that fool according to his folly, *ver.* 36. for they could not convince him, but would certainly provoke him, and Hezekiah had learned of his father David to believe, that then God would hear when he as a deaf man heard not, *Psal.* xxxviii. 14, 15. One interruption they gave him in his discourse, which was only to desire him that he would speak to them now in the Syrian language, and they would consider of what he said, and report it to the king, and if they did not give him a satisfactory answer, then he might appeal to the people, by speaking in the Jews language, *ver.* 20. This was a reasonable request, and agreeable to the custom of treaties, which is, that the plenipotentiaries should settle matters between themselves, before any thing be made public; but Hilkiah did not consider what an unreasonable man he had to deal with else he would not have made him this request, for it did but exasperate Rabshakeh, and make him the more rude and boisterous, *ver.* 27. Against all the rules of decency and honour, instead of treating with the commissioners, he menaceth the soldiery, persuades them to desert or mutiny, threatens if they held out to reduce them to the last extremities of famine, and then goes on with his discourse, the scope of which is to persuade Hezekiah and his princes and people to surrender the city. Observe now, in order to this,

(1.) He magnifies his master the king of Assyria, once and again he calls him, *That great king, the king of Assyria*, *ver.* 28, 29. What an idol did he make of that prince whose creature he was! God is the great king, but Sennacherib was in his eye a little god, and he would possess them with the same veneration for him that he had, and thereby frighten them into a submission to him, but to those who by faith see the King of kings in his power and glory, even the king of Assyria looks mean and little: what are the greatest of men, when either they come to compare with God, or God comes to contend with them? *Psal.* lxxxii. 6, 7.

(2.) He endeavours to make them believe, that it would be much for their advantage to surrender; if they held out, they must expect no other but to eat their own dung, by reason of the want of provisions, which would be entirely cut off from them by the besiegers, but if they would capitulate, seek his favour with a present, and call themselves upon his mercy, he would give them very good treatment, *ver.* 31. I wonder with what face Rabshakeh could speak of making an agreement with a present, when his master had so lately broke the agreement Hezekiah made with him with that great present, *ver.* 14. Can those expect to be trusted that have been so grossly perfidious? but *ad populum phaleris*. He thinks to soothe up all with a promise, that if they would surrender upon discretion, though they must expect to be prisoners and captives, yet it would really be happy for them to be so: one would wonder he should ever think to prevail by such gross suggestions as these, but that the devil doth thus impose upon sinners every day by his temptations. He will needs persuade them, 1. That their imprisonments would be to their advantage, for they should eat every man of his own vine, *ver.* 31. Though the property of their estates would be vested in the conquerors, yet they should have the free use of them; but he doth not explain it now to them as he would afterwards, that it must be understood just as much, and just as long as the conqueror pleases. 2. That their captivity would be much more to their advantage. *I will take you away to a land like to your own land*, and what the better would they be for that, when they must have nothing in it to call their own.

(3.) That which he aims at, especially is to convince them, that it was to no purpose for them to stand it out, *what confidence is there wherein thou trustest?* So he hectors over Hezekiah, *ver.* 19. and for the people, *ver.* 29. *Let not Hezekiah deceive you into your own ruin, for he shall not be able to deliver you*, you must either bend or break; it were well if sinners would submit to the force of this argument, in making their peace with God, it is therefore our wisdom to yield to him, because it is in vain to contend with him; what confidence is that which those trust in that stand it out against him? *Are we stronger than he?* or what shall we get by setting briars and thorns before a consuming fire? But Hezekiah was not so helpless and defenceless as Rabshakeh would here represent him.

Three things he supposeth Hezekiah might trust to, and he endeavours to make out the insufficiency of each.

1. His own military preparations; *Thou sayest I have counsel and strength for war*, and we find that so he had, *2 Chron.* xxxii. 3. But this Rabshakeh turns off with a slight, *they are but vain words*, thou art an unequal match for us, *ver.* 20. With the greatest haughtiness and disdain imaginable, he challengeth him to produce two thousand men of all his people that knew how to sit a horse, and will venture to give him two thousand horses if he can; he falsely insinuates that he had no men, or none fit to be soldiers, *ver.* 23. thus he thinks to run him down with confidence and haunter, and will lay him any wager that one captain of the least of his master's service is able to baffie him and all his forces.

2. His alliance with Egypt; he supposeth he trusted to Egypt for chariots and horsemen, *ver.* 24. because the king of Israel had done so, and of this confidence he truly saith, it is a broken reed, *ver.* 21. it will not only fail a man when he leans on it, and expects it to bear his weight, but it will run into his hand and pierce it, and rend his shoulder, as the prophet farther

illustrates this similitude with application to Egypt, *Ezek.* xxix. 6, 7. so is the king of Egypt, saith he, and truly so had the king of Assyria been to Ahaz, who trusted in him, but he distressed him, and strengthened him not, *2 Chron.* xxviii. 20. They that trust to an arm of flesh, will find it no better than a broken reed, but God is the rock of ages.

3. His interest in God, and relation to him: this was indeed the confidence in which Hezekiah trusted, *ver.* 22. he supported himself by depending on the power and promise of God, with this he encouraged himself and his people, *ver.* 30. *The Lord will surely deliver us*, and again, *ver.* 32. this he was sensible was their great stay, and therefore he is most large in his endeavours to shake this, as David's enemies, who used all the arts they had to drive him from his confidence in God, *Psal.* lxxiii. 2. xi. 1. and thus did Christ's enemies, *Matth.* xxvii. 43.

Three things Rabshakeh suggests to discourage their confidence in God, and they are all false.

1. That Hezekiah had forfeited God's protection, and thrown himself out of it by *destroying the high places and the altars*, *ver.* 22. Here he measures the God of Israel by the gods of the heathen, who delighted in the multitude of altars and temples, and concludes that Hezekiah had given a great offence to the God of Israel in obliging his people to one altar; thus is one of the best deeds he ever did in his life misconstrued as impious and profane, by one that did not or would not know the law of the God of Israel; if that be represented by ignorant and malicious men as evil and a provocation to God, which is really good and pleasing to him, we must not think it strange; if this was to be sacrilegious, Hezekiah would ever be so.

2. That God had given orders for the destruction of Jerusalem at this time, *ver.* 25. *Am I now come up without the Lord?* This is all banter and rhodomontade; he did not himself think he had any commission from God to do what he did, by whom should he have it? but he hectors thus to amuse and terrify the people that were on the wall. If he had any colour at all for what he said, it might be taken from the notice which perhaps he had had by the writings of the prophets of the hand of God, in the destruction of the ten tribes, and he thought he had as good a warrant for the seizing of Jerusalem as of Samaria; many that have fought against God, have pretended commissions from him.

3. That if Jehovah, the God of Israel should, undertake to protect them from the king of Assyria, yet he was not able to do it; with this blasphemy he concludes his speech, *ver.* 33, 34, 35. comparing the God of Israel with the gods of the nations whom he had conquered, and putting him upon the level with them, and concluding, that because they could not defend and deliver their worshippers, the God of Israel could not defend and deliver his. See here, (1.) His pride; every city he had conquered, he reckoned himself to have conquered the gods of that city, and valued himself mightily upon it; his high opinion of the idols, made him have a high opinion of himself as too hard for them. (2.) His profaneness; the god of Israel was not a local deity, but the god of the whole earth, the only living and true God, the Ancient of days, and had many a time proved himself to be above all gods, yet he makes no more of him than of the upstart fictitious gods of Hamath and Arpad, unfairly arguing that the gods (as some now say the priests) of all religions are the same, and himself above them all; the tradition of the Jews is, that Rabshakeh was an apostate Jew, which made him so ready in the Jews language; and if so, his ignorance of the God of Israel was the less excusable, and his enmity the less strange, for apostates are commonly the most bitter and spiteful enemies, witness Julian. A great deal of art and management, it must be owned, there is in his speech of Rabshakeh's, but withal a great deal of pride, malice, falsehood and blasphemy; one grain of sincerity would have been worth all this wit and rhetoric.

Lastly, We are told what the commissioners on Hezekiah's part did. (1.) They held their peace, not for want of something to say both on God's behalf and Hezekiah's, they might easily and justly have upbraided him with his master's treachery and breach of faith, and have asked him what religion encouraged him to hope that that would prosper? At least they might have given him that grave hint which Ahab gave to Benhadad's like insolent demands, let not him that girdeth on the harness boast as though he had put it off; but the king had commanded them not to answer him, and they observed their instructions; there is a time to keep silence as well as a time to speak, and there are those to whom to offer any thing religious or rational is to cast pearls before swine; what should one talk to a madman? It is likely their silence made Rabshakeh yet more proud and secure, and so his heart was lifted up and hardened to his destruction. (2.) They rent their clothes, in detestation of his blasphemy, and in grief for the despised afflicted condition of Jerusalem, the reproach of which was a burthen to them. (3.) They faithfully reported the matter to the king their master, and told him the words of Rabshakeh, that he might consider what was to be done, what course they should take, and what answer they should return to Rabshakeh's summons.

C H A P. XIX.

Jerusalem's great distresses we read of in the foregoing chapter, and left it besieged, insulted, threatened, terrified, and just ready to be swallowed up by the Assyrian army: But in this chapter, we have an account of its glorious deliverance, not by sword or bow but by prayer and prophecy, and by the hand of an angel. 1. Hezekiah, in a great concern sent to the prophet Isaiah to desire his prayers, *ver.* 1—5. and received from him an answer of peace, *ver.* 6, 7. 2. Sennacherib sent a letter to Hezekiah to frighten him into a surrender, *ver.* 8—13. 3. Hezekiah thereupon by a very solemn prayer, recommended his case to God the righteous Judge, and begged help from him, *ver.* 14—19. 4. God, by Isaiah, sent him a very comfortable message, assuring him of deliverance, *ver.* 20—34. 5. The army of the Assyrians was all cut off by an angel, and Sennacherib himself slain by his own sons, *ver.* 35—37. And so God glorified himself, and saved his people.

1. **A**ND it came to pass when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD. 2. And he sent Eliakim, which *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz. 3. And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there

there is not strength to bring forth. 4. It may be the LORD thy God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God; and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left. 5. So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah. 6. ¶ And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. 7. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land, and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

The contents of Rabshakeh's speech being brought to Hezekiah, one would have expected (and it is likely Rabshakeh did expect) he should have called a council of war, and it should have been debated whether it was best to capitulate or no. Before the siege he had taken council with his princes and his mighty men, 2 Chron. xxxii. 3. but that would not do now; his greatest relief is, that he has a God to go to, and what passed between him and his God on this occasion we have here an account of.

1. Hezekiah discovered a mighty concern at the dishonour done to God by Rabshakeh's blasphemy: When he heard it, though at second hand, he rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth, ver. 1. Good men used to do so when they heard of any reproach cast on God's name, and great men must not think it any disparagement to them to sympathize with the injured honour of the great God. Royal robes are not too good to be rent, nor royal flesh too good to be clothed with sackcloth, in humiliation for indignities done to God, and for the perils and frights of his Jerusalem. This God now called to, and was displeased with those who were not thus affected, Isa. xxii. 12, 13, 14. Behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, though it was a day of trouble and perplexity in the valley of vision, ver. 5. which refers to this very event: The king in sackcloth, but many of his subjects in soft clothing.

2. He went up to the house of the Lord, according to the example of the psalmist, who when he was grieved at the pride and prosperity of the wicked, went into the sanctuary of God, and there understood their end, Psalm lxxiii. 17. He went to the house of God to meditate and pray, and get his spirit into a sedate composed frame under this ruffle. He was not considering what answer to return to Rabshakeh, but refers himself to God, Thou shalt answer, Lord for me; Herbert. In the house of the Lord he found a place both of rest and refuge, a treasury, a magazine, a council chamber, and all he needed, all in God. Note, When the church's enemies are very daring and threatening, it is the wisdom and duty of the church's friends to apply themselves to God, appeal to him, and leave their cause with him.

3. He sent to the prophet Isaiah, by honourable messengers in token of the great respect he had for him, to desire his prayers, ver. 2, 3, 4. Eliakim and Shebna were two of those that had heard the words of Rabshakeh, and were the better able both to possess and to affect Isaiah with the case. The elders of the priests were to pray for the people themselves in time of trouble, Joel ii. 17. but they must go to engage Isaiah's prayers, because he could pray better, and had a better interest in heaven. The messengers were to go in sackcloth, because they were to represent the king, who was so clothed. Their errand to Isaiah was, lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left, i. e. for Judah, which is but a remnant now the ten tribes are gone; for Jerusalem, which is but a remnant now the defenced cities of Judah are taken. Note, 1. It is very desirable, and what we should be desirous of when we are in trouble, to have the prayers of our friends for us. In begging it, we honour God, we honour prayer, and we honour our brethren. 2. When we desire the prayers of others for us, that must not excuse us from praying for ourselves. When Hezekiah sent to Isaiah to pray for him, he himself went into the house of the Lord to offer up his own prayers. 3. Those who speak from God to us, we should in a particular manner desire to speak to God for us. He is a prophet and he shall pray for thee, Gen. xx. 7. The great prophet is the great intercessor. 4. Those are likely to prevail with God that lift up their prayers, i. e. that lift up their hearts in prayer. 5. When the interests of God's church are brought very low, so that there is but a remnant left, few friends, and those weak, and at a loss, then it is time to lift up our prayers for that remnant.

Two things are urged to Isaiah to engage his prayers for them.

1. Their fears of the enemy, ver. 3. He is insolent and haughty, it is a day of rebuke and blasphemy, we are despised, God is dishonoured, upon this account it is a day of trouble, never was such a king and kingdom so trampled on and abused as we are; our soul is exceedingly filled with the contempt of the proud; and it is a sword in our bones to hear them reproach our confidence in God, and say, where is now your God? And, which is worst of all, we see not which way we can help ourselves, and get clear of the reproach. Our cause is good, our people are faithful, but we are quite overpowered with numbers; the children are brought to the birth, now is the time, the critical moment, when, if ever, we must be relieved; one successful blow given to the enemy would do our business. But alas, we are not able to give it; there is not strength to bring forth. Our case is as deplorable, and calls for as speedy help, as that of a woman in travail, that is quite spent with her throws, so that she has not strength to bear the child. Compare with this, Hof. xiii. 13. When we are ready to perish, if thou canst do anything, have compassion on us and help us.

2. Their hopes in God. To him they look, on him they depend to appear for them; one word from him will turn the scale, and save the sinking remnant; if he but reprove the words of Rabshakeh, i. e. disprove them, ver. 4. if he undertake to convince and confound the blasphemer, all will be well. And this they trust he will do, not for their merits sake, but for his own honour's sake, because he has reproached the living God, by levelling him with deaf and dumb idols. They have reason to think the issue will be good, for they can interest God in the quarrel: Psalm lxxiv. 22. Arise, O God, plead thine own cause. He is the Lord thy God, (say they to Isaiah) thine, whose glory thou art concerned for, and whose favour thou art interested in. He hath heard and known the blasphemous words of Rabshakeh, and therefore it may be he will hear and rebuke them. We hope he will. Help us with thy prayers to bring the cause before him, and then we are content to leave it with him.

4. God, by Isaiah, sent to Hezekiah, to assure him that he would glorify himself in the ruin of the Assyrians. Hezekiah sent to Isaiah, not to enquire concerning the event, as many did that sent to the prophets, shall I recover? or the like; but to desire his assistance in his duty. That was it he was solicitous about; and therefore God let him know what the event should be, in recompence of his care to do his duty, ver. 6, 7. 1. God No. LVIII.*

interests himself into the cause; they have blasphemed me. 2. He encourages Hezekiah, who was much dismayed; Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard: they are but words, though big words, and ho words; and words are but wind. 3. He promised to frighten the king of Assyria, worse than Rabshakeh had frightened him; I will send a blast upon him, that pestilential breath which killed his army, upon which terror shall seize him, and drive him into his own country, where death shall meet him. This short threatening from the mouth of God would do execution, when all the impotent menaces that came from Rabshakeh's mouth would vanish into air.

8. ¶ So Rabshakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish. 9. And when he heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee: he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah, saying, 10. Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest, deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. 11. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered? 12. Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; as Gozan and Haran, and Rezep, and the children of Eden which were in Thelassar? 13. Where is the king of Amath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivah? 14. ¶ And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it; and Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. 15. And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth, thou hast made heaven and earth. 16. LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God. 17. Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations, and their lands. 18. And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. 19. Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD God, even thou only.

Rabshakeh having delivered his message, and received no answer, (which silence whether he took it for a consent or a slight, doth not appear) left his army before Jerusalem, under the command of the other generals, and went himself to attend the king his master for farther orders. He found him besieging Libnah, a city that had revolted from Judah, chap. viii. 22. Whether he had taken Lachish or no, is not certain; some think he departed from it, because he found the taking of it impracticable, ver. 8. However, he was now alarmed with the rumour, that the king of the Cushites, who bordered upon the Arabians, was coming out against him with a great army, ver. 9. This made him very desirous to gain Jerusalem with all speed: To take it by force would cost him more time and men than he could well spare, and therefore he renews his attack upon Hezekiah, to persuade him tamely to surrender it. Having found him an easy man once, chap. xviii. 14. when he said, that which thou puttest on me I will bear, he hoped again to frighten him into a submission, but in vain. Here,

1. Sennacherib sent a letter to Hezekiah, a railing letter, a blasphemous letter, to persuade him to surrender Jerusalem, because it would be to no purpose for him to think of standing it out. His letter is to the same purpose with Rabshakeh's speech, there is nothing new offered in it. Rabshakeh had said to the people, Let not Hezekiah deceive you, chap. xviii. 29. Sennacherib writes to Hezekiah, Let not thy God deceive thee, ver. 10. Those that have the God of Jacob for their help, and whose hope is in the Lord their God, need not fear being deceived by him, as the heathens were by their gods.

To terrify Hezekiah, and drive him from his anchor, he magnifies himself and his own achievements. See how proudly he boasts, 1. Of the lands he had conquered, ver. 11. all lands, and destroyed utterly! How are the mole-hills of his victories swelled to mountains! So far was he from destroying all lands, that at this time the land of Cush, and Tirhakah its king, were a terror to him. What vast hyperboles may one expect in proud men's praises of themselves! 2. Of the gods he had conquered, ver. 12. Each vanquished nation had its gods, which were so far from being able to deliver them, that they fell with them: and shall thy God deliver thee? 3. Of the kings he had conquered, ver. 13. the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad. Whether he means the prince or the idol, he means to make himself appear greater than either, and therefore very formidable, and the terror of the mighty in the land of the living.

1. Hezekiah incloseth this in another letter, a praying letter, a believing letter, and sends it to the King of kings, who judgeth among the gods. Hezekiah was not so haughty as to receive the letter, though we may suppose the superscription did not give him his due titles; when he had received it, he was not so careless as not to read it; when he had read it, he was not in such a passion to write an answer to it in the same provoking language, but he immediately went up to the temple, presented himself, and then spread the letter before the Lord, ver. 14. Not as if God needed to have letters shewed him, he knew what was in it before Hezekiah did; but hereby he signified that he acknowledged God in all his ways, that he desired not to aggravate the injuries his enemies did him, or to make them appear worse than they were, but desired they might be set in a true light; and that he referred himself to God and his righteous judgment upon the whole matter. Hereby likewise he would affect himself in the prayer he came to the temple to make, and we have need of all possible helps to quicken us in that duty.

In the prayer which Hezekiah prayed over this letter,

1. He adores the God whom Sennacherib had blasphemed, *ver. 15.* calls him *the God of Israel*, because Israel was his peculiar people; and the God that dwelt between the cherubims, because there was the peculiar residence of his glory upon earth; but gives glory to him as the God of the whole earth, and not as Sennacherib fancied him to be the God of Israel only, and confined to the temple: Let them say what they will, thou art sovereign Lord, for thou art the God, the God of gods; sole Lord, even thou alone; universal Lord of all the kingdoms of the earth; and rightful Lord, for thou hast made heaven and earth. Being creator of all, by an uncontested title thou art owner and ruler of all.

2. He appeals to God concerning the insolence and profaneness of Sennacherib, *ver. 16.* *Lord, hear; Lord, see.* Here it is under his own hand; here it is in black and white. Had Hezekiah only been abused, he would have passed it by, but it is God, the living God that is reproached, the jealous God. Lord, what wilt thou do for thy great name?

3. He owns Sennacherib's triumphs over the gods of the heathen, but distinguished between them and the God of Israel, *ver. 17, 18.* They have indeed cast all their gods into the fire; for they were no gods, unable to help either themselves or their worshippers, and therefore no wonder they have destroyed them; and in destroying them, though they knew it not, they really served the justice and jealousy of the God of Israel, who was determined to smite all the gods of the heathen. But they are deceived who think they can therefore be too hard for him. He is none of the gods whom men's hands had made, but who has himself made all things, *Psal. cxv. 3, 4.*

4. He prays that God would now glorify himself in the defeat of Sennacherib, and the deliverance of Jerusalem out of his hands, *ver. 19.* *Now therefore give us,* for if we be conquered, as other lands are, they will say that thou art conquered, as the gods of those lands were; but, Lord, distinguish thyself by distinguishing us, and let all the world know, and be made to confess, that thou art the Lord God, the self-existent, sovereign God, even thou only, and that all pretenders are vanity and a lie. Note, The best pleas in prayer are those which are taken from God's honour, and the concerns of that, and therefore the Lord's prayer begins with *hallowed be thy name*, and concludes with *thine is the glory*.

20. ¶ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah: saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, *That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard.* 21. *This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him, The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn, the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.* 22. *Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lift up thine eyes on high? even against the holy One of Israel.* 23. *By thy messengers thou hast reproached the LORD, and hast said, with the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar-trees thereof, and choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of his borders, and into the forest of his Carmel.* 24. *I have digged and drank strange waters, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places.* 25. *Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it, and of ancient times, that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps.* 26. *Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded, they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the house-top, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.* 27. *But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me,* 28. *Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.* 29. *And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same, and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof.* 30. *And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah, shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.* 31. *For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.* 32. *Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it.* 33. *By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into the city, saith the LORD.* 34. *For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.*

We have here the gracious copious answer which God gave to Hezekiah's prayer. The message which he sent him by the same hand, *ver. 6, 7.* one would think had been an answer sufficient to his prayer; but that he might have strong consolation, he is encouraged by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, *Heb. vi. 18.* In general, God assures him that his prayer was heard, his prayer against Sennacherib, *ver. 20.* Note, The case of those is miserable, that have the prayers of God's people against them: For if the oppressed cry to God against the oppressor, he will hear, *Exod. xxii. 23.* God hears and answers; hears with the saving strength of his right hand, *Psal. xx. 6.*

This message speaks two things,

1. Confusion and shame to Sennacherib and his forces. It is here fore-

told, that he should be humbled and broken. The prophet elegantly directs his speech to him, as he doth, *Isa. x. 5.* *O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger.* Not that this message was sent to him, but what is here said to him he was made to know by the event; Providence spoke it to him with a witness; and perhaps his own heart was made to whisper this to him; for God has more ways than one of speaking to sinners in his wrath, so as to vex them in his sore displeasure, *Psal. ii. 5.*

Sennacherib is here represented,

(1.) As the scorn of Jerusalem, *ver. 21.* He thought himself the terror of the daughter of Zion, that chaste and beautiful virgin, and that by his threats he could force her to submit to him; but being a virgin in her father's house, and under his protection, she despised thee, despised thee, laughs thee to scorn. Thine impotent malice is ridiculous; he that sits in heaven laughs at thee, and therefore so do those that abide under his shadow. By this word God intended to silence the fears of Hezekiah and his people. Though to an eye of sense the enemy looked formidable, to an eye of faith he looked despicable.

(2.) As an enemy to God, and that was enough to make him miserable, Hezekiah pleaded this; Lord, he has reproached thee, *ver. 16.* So he has, saith God, and I take it as against myself, *ver. 22.* *Whom thou hast reproached?* Is it not the holy One of Israel? whose honour is dear to him, and who has power to vindicate it, which the gods of the heathen have not. *Nemo me inquit læset.*

(3.) As a proud vain-glorious fool, that spoke great swelling words of vanity, and boasted of a false gift, by his brags as well as by his threats, reproaching the Lord. For, 1. He magnified his own achievements out of measure, and quite above what really they were, *ver. 23, 24.* thou hast said so and so. This was not in the letter he wrote, but God lets Hezekiah know he not only saw what was written there, but heard what he said elsewhere, probably, in the speeches he made to his councils or armies. Note, God takes notice of the boast of proud men, and will call them to an account, that he may look upon them, and abase them, *Job xl. 11.* What a mighty figure doth Sennacherib think he makes! driving his chariots to the tops of the highest mountains, forcing his way through woods and rivers, breaking through all difficulties, making himself master of all he had a mind to: nothing could stand before him, or be withheld from him; no hills too high for him to climb, no trees too strong for him to fell, no waters too deep for him to dry up, as if he had the power of a God to speak and it is done. 2. He took to himself the glory of doing these great things, whereas they were all the Lord's doing, *ver. 25, 26.* Sennacherib, in his letter, had appealed to what Hezekiah had heard, *ver. 11.* *Thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done;* but in answer to that, he is minded of what God has done for Israel of old, drying up the Red-sea, leading them through the wilderness, planting them in Canaan; what are all thy doings to these? And as for the desolations thou hast made in the earth, and particularly in Judah, thou art but the instrument in God's hands, a meer tool, it is I that have brought it to pass: I gave thee thy power, gave thee thy success, and made thee what thou art; raised thee up to lay waste fenced cities, and so to punish them for their wickedness, and therefore their inhabitants were of small power. What a foolish insolent thing was it for him to exalt himself above God, and against God, upon that which he had done by him and under him. Sennacherib's brags here are expounded, *Isa. x. 13, 14.* *By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom,* &c. and they are answered, *ver. 15.* *Shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith?* No, it is absurd for the fly upon the wheel to say, what a dust do I make? or for the sword in the hand to say, what execution do I do? If God be the principal agent in all that is done, boasting is for ever excluded.

(4.) As under the check and rebuke of that God whom he blasphemed. All his motions were, 1. Under the divine cognizance, *ver. 27.* *I know thine abode,* and what thou dost secretly devise and design; *thy going out and coming in,* marches and counter-marches, and thy rage against me and my people, the tumult of thy passions, the tumult of thy preparations, the noise and bluster thou makest, I know it all. That was more than Hezekiah did, who wished for intelligence of the enemy's motions; but what needed it, when the eye of God was a constant spy upon him? 2. *Chron. xvi. 9.* 2. Under the divine control, *ver. 28.* *I will put my hook in thy nose,* thou great Leviathan, *Job xli. 1, 2.* *My bridle in thy jaws,* thou great Behemoth. I will restrain thee, manage thee, turn thee where I please, send thee home, *re infecta*, like a fool as thou camest. Note, It is a great comfort to all the church's friends, that God has a hook in the nose, and a bridle in the jaws of all her enemies; can make even their wrath to serve and praise him, and then restrain the remainder of it: *Here shall its proud waves be staid.*

2. Salvation and joy to Hezekiah and his people. This shall be a sign to them of God's favour, and that he is reconciled to them, and his anger is turned away, *Isa. xii. 1.* a wonder in their eyes (for so a sign sometime signifies) a token for good, and an earnest of the farther mercy God has in store for them, that a good issue shall be put to their present distress in every respect.

1. Provisions were scarce and dear, and what should they do for food? The fruits of the earth were devoured by the Assyrian army, *Isa. xxxii. 9, 10, &c.* Why, they should not only dwell in the land, but *verily they shall be fed:* If God save them, he will not starve them, nor let them die by famine, when they had escaped the sword: *Eat ye this year that which groweth of itself,* and you shall find enough of that. Did the Assyrians reap what you sowed? you shall reap what you did not sow. But the next year was the sabbatical year, when the land was to rest, and they must neither sow nor reap. What must they do that year? Why *Jehovah-jireh*, The Lord will provide, God's blessings shall save them seed and labour, and that year too the voluntary products of the earth shall serve to maintain them, to mind them that the earth brought forth before there was a man to till it, *Gen. i. 11.* And then the third year their husbandry should return into its former channel, and they should sow and reap as they used to do.

2. The country was laid waste, families were broken up and scattered, and all was in confusion; how should it be otherwise, when it was over-run by such an army. As to this, it is promised, that the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah, i. e. of the country people, shall yet again be planted in their own habitations, upon their own estates, shall take root there, shall increase and grow rich, *ver. 30.* See how their prosperity is described, it is taking root downward, and bearing root upward, being well fixed, and well provided for themselves, and then doing good to others. Such is the prosperity of the soul, it is taken root downwards by faith in Christ, and then being fruitful in fruits of righteousness.

3. The city was shut up; none went out or came in, but now the remnant in Jerusalem and Zion shall go forth freely, and there should be none to hinder them, or make them afraid, *ver. 31.* Great destruction had been both in city and country, but in both there was a remnant that escaped, which typified the saved remnant of Israelites indeed, as appears by comparing *Isa. x. 22, 23.* which speaks of this very event, with *Rom. ix. 27, 28.* they shall go forth into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

4. The Assyrians were advancing towards Jerusalem, and would in a little time besiege it in form, and it was in great danger of falling into their hands;

hands: But it is here promised the siege they feared should be prevented, though the enemy were now (as it should seem) encamped before the city, yet they shall never come into the city, no nor so much as shoot an arrow into it, *ver.* 32, 33. He shall be forced to retire with shame, and a thousand times to repent his undertaking. God himself undertakes to defend the city; *ver.* 34. And that person, that place cannot but be safe which he undertakes the protection of.

5. The honour and truth of God are engaged for the doing of all this. These are great things, but how will they be effected? Why, *the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this*, *ver.* 31. He is Lord of hosts, has all creatures at his beck, therefore he is able to do it: he is *jealous for Jerusalem with great jealousy*, *Zech.* i. 14. having espoused her a chaste virgin to himself, he will not suffer her to be abused, *ver.* 21. You have reason to think yourselves unworthy that such great things should be done for you, but God's own zeal will do it. His zeal, 1. For his own honour, *ver.* 34. I will do it for my own sake, to make me an everlasting name. God's reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself. 2. For his own truth: I will do it for my servant David's sake; not for the sake of his merit, but the promise made to him, and the covenant made with him, those sure mercies of David. Thus all the deliverances of the church are wrought for the sake of Christ the son of David.

35. ¶ And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians, an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. 36. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh. 37. And it came to pass as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia; and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

Sometimes it was long ere prophecies were accomplished, and promises performed; but here the word was no sooner spoken, but the work was done.

1. The army of Assyria was entirely routed. That night, which immediately followed the sending of this message to Hezekiah, when the enemy was just set down before the city, and were preparing (as we now say) to open the trenches, that night was (he main body of their army slain upon the spot by an angel, *ver.* 35. Hezekiah had not force sufficient to rally out upon them, and attack their camp, nor would God do it by the sword or bow, but he sent his angel, a destroying angel, in the dead of the night, to make an assault upon them, which their centinels, though never so wakeful, could neither discover nor resist. It was not by the sword of a mighty man, or of a mean man, *i. e.* not of any man at all, but of an angel, that the Assyrian army was to fall, *Isa.* xxxi. 8. such an angel as slew the first-born of Egypt. Josephus saith, it was done by a pestilential disease, which was their death presently. The number slain was very great, one hundred and eighty-five thousand men, and Rabshakeh, it is likely, among the rest. When the besieged rose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses, scarce a living man among them. Some think the seventy-sixth Psalm was penned on this occasion, where we read, that the stout-hearted were spoiled, and slept their sleep, their long sleep, *ver.* 5. See how great in power and might the holy angels are, when one angel, in one night, could make so great a slaughter. See how weak the mightiest of men are before Almighty God: who ever hardened himself against him and prospered? The pride and blasphemy of the king is punished by the destruction of his army. All these lives are sacrificed to God's glory, and Zion's safety. The prophet shews, that therefore God suffered this vast rendezvous to be made, that they might be gathered as sheaves into the floor, *Micah* iv. 12, 13.

2. The king of Assyria was hereby put into the utmost confusion; ashamed to see himself, after all his proud boasts, thus defeated, and disabled to pursue his conquests, and secure what he had, (for this, we may suppose, was the flower of his army) and continually afraid of falling under the like stroke himself. He departed, and went, and returned; the manner of the expression intimates the great disorder and distraction of mind he was in, *ver.* 36. and it was not long before God cut him off too, by the hands of two of his sons, *ver.* 37. (1.) They that did it were very wicked, to kill their own father, whom they were bound to protect, and in the act of his devotion; monstrous villainy! But, (1.) God was righteous in it. Justly are the sons suffered to rebel against their father that begat them, when he was in rebellion against the God that made him. They, whose children are undutiful to them, ought to consider, whether they have not been so to their father in heaven. The God of Israel had done enough to convince him, that he was the only true God, whom therefore he ought to worship; yet he persists in his idolatry, and seeks to his false god for protection against a God of irresistible power. Justly is his blood mingled with his sacrifices who will not be convinced by such a plain and dear-bought demonstration of his folly in worshipping idols.

His sons that murdered him were suffered to escape, and no pursuit made after them; his own kingdom perhaps being weary of the government of so proud a man, and thinking themselves well rid of him. And his sons would be looked upon as the more excusable in what they had done, if it be true which Bishop Patrick suggested, that he was now vowing to sacrifice them to his god, so that it was for their own preservation that they sacrificed him. His successor was another son, Esarhaddon; who (as it should seem) did not aim, like his father to enlarge his conquests, but rather to improve them; for he it was that first sent colonies of Assyrians to inhabit the country of Samaria, though it be mentioned before, *chap.* xvii. 24. as appears, *Ezra* iv. 2. where the Samaritans say, it was Esarhaddon that brought them thither.

C H A P. XX.

In this chapter we have, 1. Hezekiah's sickness and his recovery from that in answer to prayer, in performance of a promise, in the use of means, and confirmed with a sign, *ver.* 1—11. 2. Hezekiah's sin, and his recovery from that; *ver.* 12—19. In both these Isaiah was God's messenger to him. 3. The conclusion of his reign, *ver.* 20, 21.

1. IN those days was Hezekiah sick unto death: and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amos came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine

house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live. 2. Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying, 3. I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight: and Hezekiah wept fore. 4. And it came to pass afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 5. Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee; on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD. 6. And I will add unto thy days fifteen years, and I will deliver thee, and this city, out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake. 7. And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. 8. ¶ And Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day? 9. And Isaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken; shall the shadow go forward ten degrees: or go back ten degrees? 10. And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees. 11. And Isaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD, and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

The historian having shewed us blaspheming Sennacherib destroyed in the midst of the prospects of life, here shews us praying Hezekiah delivered in the midst of the prospects of death, the days of the former shortened, of the latter prolonged.

1. Here is Hezekiah's sickness. In those days, *i. e.* in the same year in which the king of Assyria besieged Jerusalem, for he reigning in all twenty-nine years, and surviving this fifteen years, this must be in his fourteenth year, and so was that, *chap.* xviii. 13. Some think it was at the time that the Assyrian army was besieging the city, or preparing for it, because God promisseth, *ver.* 6. I will defend the city, which promise was afterwards repeated, when the danger came to be most imminent, *chap.* xix. 34. Others think it was soon after the defeat of Sennacherib, and that it shews us the uncertainty of all our comforts in this world; Hezekiah, in the midst of his triumphs, in the favour of God, and over the forces of his enemies, is seized with sickness, and under the arrest of death; we must therefore always rejoice with trembling. It should seem he was sick of the plague, for we read of the boil or plague-fore, *ver.* 7. The same disease which was killing to the Assyrians was trying to him; God took it from him, and put it upon his enemies. Neither greatness nor goodness can exempt from sickness from sore and mortal sicknesses. Hezekiah, lately favoured of heaven above most men, yet is sick unto death, in the midst of his days, under forty, and yet sick and dying, and perhaps he was more apprehensive of its being fatal to him, because his father died when he was about his age, two or three years younger; in the midst of life we are in death.

2. Warning brought him to prepare for death, it is brought by Isaiah, who had been twice in the former chapter a messenger of good tidings to him; we cannot expect to receive from God's prophets any other than what they have received from the Lord, and that we must bid welcome, be it pleasing or displeasing: he tells him, (1.) That his disease was mortal, and, if he were not recovered by a miracle of mercy, would be certainly fatal; *thou shalt die, and not live.* (2.) That therefore he must with all speed get ready for death; this we are most highly concerned to do when we are in health, but are most loudly called to do when we come to be sick; set the heart in order by renewed acts of repentance and faith, and resignation to God, which cheerful farewells to this world, and welcomes to another; and if it be not done before, (which is the best and wisest course) let the house in order, make thy will, set thine estate, put thine affairs in the best posture thou canst, for the case of those that shall come after thee; Isaiah speaks not to Hezekiah of his kingdom; only of his house: David being a prophet, had authority to appoint who should reign after him, but other kings did not pretend to bequeath their crown as part of their goods and chattels.

3. His prayer hereupon; *He prayed unto the Lord*, *ver.* 2. Is any sick? let him be prayed for, let him be prayed with, and let him pray; Hezekiah had found in the foregoing chapter, that it was not in vain to wait upon God, but that the prayers of faith bring in answers of peace, therefore will he call upon God as long as he lives; happy returns of prayer are engagements and encouragements to continue instant in prayers; he had now received the sentence of death within himself, and, (1.) If it were reversible, it must be reversed by prayer; when God purporeth mercy, he will for this he enquired of, *Ezek.* xxxvii. 37. We have not, if we ask not, or ask amiss. (2.) If not, prayer is one of the best preparations for death, because by it we fetch in strength and grace from God to enable us to finish well. Observe,

(1.) The circumstances of this prayer. 1. He turned his face to the wall, probably, as he lay in his bed; this he did either for privacy, he could not retire to his closet as he used to do, but he retired as well as he could, turned from the company that were about him to converse with God. When we cannot be so private as we would be in our devotions, nor perform them with the usual outward expressions of reverence and solemnity, yet we must not therefore omit them, but compose ourselves to them as well we can; or, as some think, he turned his face towards the temple, to shew how willingly he would have gone up thither to pray this prayer, as he did, *chap.* xviii. 1—41. if he had been able, and remembering what encouragements were given to all the prayers that should be made in or towards that house. Christ is our temple, to him we must have an eye in all our prayers, for no man, no service comes to the Father but by him. 2. He wept sore; some gather from hence that he was unwilling to die; it is in the nature of a man to have some dread of the separation of soul and body, and it was not strange, if the Old-Testament saints, to whom another world was but dark revealed were not so willing to leave this as St. Paul and other New-Testament saints were;

were; there was also something peculiar in Hezekiah's case, he was now in the midst of his usefulness, had begun a good work of reformation, which he feared, if he should die, through the corruption of the people, would fall to the ground; if this was before the defeat of the Assyrian army, as some think, he might therefore be loth to die, because his kingdom was in imminent danger of being ruined; however, it doth not appear that he had now any son, Manasseh, that succeeded him was not born till three years after, and if he die childless, both the peace of his kingdom and the promise to David would be in danger: but perhaps these were only tears of importunity, and expressions of a lively affection in prayer; Jacob wept and made supplication, and our blessed Saviour, though most willing to die, yet offered up strong cries, with tears, to him that he knew *able to save him*, Heb. v. 7. Let Hezekiah's prayer interpret his tears, and in that we find nothing that speaks him under any of that fear of death, which has either bondage or torment.

(2.) The prayer itself; *Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth*, and either spare me to live, that I may continue thus to walk, or if my work be done, receive me to that glory which thou hast prepared for those that have thus walked. Observe here, 1. The description of Hezekiah's piety, he had had his conversation in the world with right intentions, I have walked before thee, as under thine eye, and with an eye ever towards thee; from a right principle, *in truth, and with an upright heart*; and by a right rule, *I have done that which is good in thy sight*. 2. The comfort he had now in reflection upon it, it made his sick bed easy. Note, The testimony of conscience for us, that we have walked with God in our integrity, will be much our support and rejoicing when we come to look death in the face, 2 Cor. i. 12. 3. The humble mention he makes of it to God, *Lord, Remember it now*, not as if God needed to be put in mind of any thing by us, he is greater than our hearts, and knows all things, or as if the reward were of debt, and might be demanded as due, it is Christ's righteousness only that is the purchase of mercy and grace, but our own sincerity may be pleaded as the condition of the covenant which God has wrought in us; it is the work of thine own hands, Lord, own it. Hezekiah doth not pray, Lord, spare me, or Lord, take me, God's will be done; but, *Lord, Remember me, whether I live or die, let me be thine*.

4. The answer which God immediately gave to this prayer of Hezekiah's; the prophet was got but to the middle court when he was sent back with another message to Hezekiah, ver. 4, 5. to tell him that he should recover, not that there is with God yea or nay, or that he ever saith or unsaith, but upon Hezekiah's prayer, which he foresaw, and which his spirit inclined him to, God did that for him, which otherwise he would not have done; God here calls Hezekiah the captain of his people, to intimate that he would relieve him for his people's sake, because in this time of war they could ill spare such a captain; he calls himself the God of David, to intimate that he would relieve him, out of a regard to the covenant made with David, and the promise that he would always ordain a lamp for him.

In this answer, (1.) God honours his prayers by the notice he takes of them, and the reference he has to them in this message, *I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears*; prayers that have much life and affection in them, are in a special manner pleasing to God. (2.) God outdoes his prayers; he only begged God would remember his integrity, but God here promiseth, 1. To recover him from his illness, *I will heal thee*; diseases are his servants; as they go where he sends them, so they come when he demands them, *Matth. viii. 8, 9. I am the Lord that healeth thee*, Exod. xv. 26. 2. To restore him to such a degree of health, that on the third day he should go up to the house of the Lord, to return thanks; God knew Hezekiah's heart, how dearly he loved the habitation of God's house, and the place where his honour dwelt, and that as soon as he was well he would go to attend on public ordinances; thitherward he turned his face when he was sick, and thitherward he would turn his feet when he was recovered, and therefore, because nothing would please him better, he promiseth him this, *Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee*; the man whom Christ healed was perfectly sound in the temple, John v. 14. 3. To add fifteen years to his life, this would not bring him to be an old man, it would reach but to fifty-four or fifty-five, yet that was longer than he had now lately expected to live. His lease was renewed, which he thought was expiring; we have not the instance of any other, that was told before-hand just how long he should live; that good man, no doubt made a good use of it, but God has wisely kept us at uncertainties, that we may be always ready. 4. To deliver Jerusalem from the king of Assyria, ver. 6. This was the thing which Hezekiah's heart was upon as much as his own recovery, and therefore the promise of this is here repeated; if this was after the raising of the siege, yet there was cause to fear Sennacherib's rallying again, no, saith God, *I will defend this city*.

5. The means which were to be used for his recovery, ver. 7. Isaiah was his physician, he ordered an outward application, a very cheap and common thing, lay a lump of figs to the boil, to ripen it, and bring it to a head, that the matter of the disease may be discharged that way; this might contribute something to the cure, and yet considering to what a height the disease was come, and how suddenly it was checked, the cure was no less than miraculous. Note, (1.) It is our duty when we are sick, to make use of such means as are proper to help nature, else we do not trust God but tempt him. (2.) Plain and ordinary medicines must not be despised, for many such God has graciously made serviceable to man, in consideration of the poor. (3.) What God appoints, he will succeed and make effectual.

6. The sign which was given for the encouragement of his faith. 1. He begged it, not in any distrust of the power or promise of God, or as if he staggered at that, but because he looked upon the things promised to be very great things, and worthy to be so confirmed, and because it had been usual with God thus to glorify himself, and favour his people; and he remembered how much God was displeased with his father for refusing to ask a sign, *Isa. vii. 10, 11, 12. Observe, Hezekiah asked, What is the sign, not that I shall go up to the thrones of judgment, or up to the gate, but up to the house of the Lord, therefore he desired to recover, that he might glorify God in the gates of the daughter of Zion*. It is not worth while to live for any other purpose but to serve God. 2. It was put to his choice whether the sun should go back or go forward, for it was equal to Omnipotence, and it would be the more likely to confirm his faith, if he chose that which he thought the more difficult of the two; perhaps, to this, that of this prophet may refer, *Isa. xlv. 11. Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me*; the degrees are supposed to be half hours, and that it was just noon when the proposal was made, and the question is, Shall the sun go back to its place at seven in the morning, or forward to its place at five in the evening? 3. He humbly desired the sun to go back ten degrees, because, though either would be a great miracle, yet it being the natural course of the sun to go forward, its going back would seem more strange, and would be more significant of Hezekiah's returning to the days of his youth, Job xxxiii. 25. and the lengthening out of the day of his life; it was accordingly done upon the prayer of Isaiah, ver. 11. he cried unto the Lord by special warrant and direction, and God brought the sun back ten degrees, which appeared to Hezekiah, (for the sign was intended for him) by the going back of the shadow upon the

dial of Ahaz, which, it is likely, he could see through his chamber window, and the same was observed upon all other dials, even in Babylon, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. Whether this retrograde motion of the sun was gradual, or *per saltum*, whether he walked back at the same pace that he used to go forward, which would make the day ten hours longer than usual, or whether he leaped back on a sudden, which continued but a little while, and then all was restored again to their usual place, so that no change was made in the state of the heavenly bodies, (as the learned Bishop Patrick thinks) we are not told; but this work of wonder shews the power of God in heaven as well as on earth, the great notice he takes of prayer, and the great favour he bears to his chosen; the most plausible idolatry of the heathen was theirs that worshipped the sun, yet that was hereby convicted of the most egregious folly and absurdity, for by this it appeared that their god was under the check of the God of Israel: Dr. Lightfoot suggests that the fifteen longs of degrees, *Psal. cxx. &c.* might, perhaps, be so called, because picked out by Hezekiah to be sung to his stringed instruments, *Isa. xxxviii. 21.* in remembrance of the degrees on the dial which the sun went back, and the fifteen years added to his life, and observes how much of these psalms is applicable to Jerusalem's distress and deliverance, and Hezekiah's sickness and recovery.

12. ¶ At that time Berodach-baladan, the son of Badadan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick. 13. And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not. 14. ¶ Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon. 15. And he said, What have they seen in thy house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures, that I have not shewed them. 16. And Isaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD. 17. Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD. 18. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon: 19. Then said Hezekiah unto Isaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days? 20. ¶ And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 21. And Hezekiah slept with his fathers: and Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

Here is, 1. An embassy sent to Hezekiah by the king of Babylon, to congratulate his recovery, ver. 12. The kings of Babylon had hitherto been only deputies and tributaries to the kings of Assyria, and Nineveh was the royal city: We find Babylon subject to the king of Assyria, *chap. xvii. 24.* But this king of Babylon began to set up for himself, and by degrees the tables turned, and Assyria became subject to the kings of Babylon. The king of Babylon sent to compliment Hezekiah, and ingratiate himself with him upon a double account. (1.) Upon the account of religion. The Babylonians worshipped the sun, and perceiving what honour their god had done to Hezekiah, in going back for his sake, they thought themselves obliged to do honour to him likewise. It is good having those our friends, whom we perceive to be the favourites of heaven. (2.) Upon the account of civil interest. If the king of Babylon was now meditating a revolt from the king of Assyria, it was policy to get Hezekiah into his interest, in answer to whose prayers, and for whose protection heaven had given that fatal blow to the king of Assyria. He found himself obliged to Hezekiah, and his God, for the weakening of the Assyrian forces, and had reason to think he could not have a more powerful and valuable ally, than one that had so good an interest in the upper world. He therefore made his court to him with all possible respect by ambassadors, letters, and a present.

2. The kind entertainment Hezekiah gave to these ambassadors, ver. 13. He ought to be civil to them, and receive them with the respect due to ambassadors; but he exceeded, and did it to a fault. (1.) He was too fond of them. He *hearkened unto them*. Though they were idolaters, yet he became intimate with them, was forward to come into a confederacy with the king their master, and granted them all they came for. He was more open and free than he should have been, and not so much upon his guard. What reason had he that was in covenant with God, so eagerly to catch at an alliance with a heathen prince, or to value himself at all upon his respects? What honour could this embassy add to one whom God had so highly favoured, that he should please himself so much with it? (2.) He was too fond of shewing them his palace, his treasures, and his magazines, that they might see and might report to their master what a great king he was, and how well worthy of the honour their master did him. It was not said that he shewed them the temple, the book of the law, and the manner of his worship, that he might profess to them the true religion, which he had now a fair opportunity of doing; but in compliment to them, lest that should affront them, he waved that, and shewed them the rich furniture of his closet, the house of his precious things, the wealth he had heaped up since the king of Assyria had emptied his coffers, his silver, and gold, and spices. All the valuable things he had he shewed them, either himself or by his officers. And what harm was there in this? What more commonly, and we think, more innocently done, than to shew strangers the riches and rarities of a country? To shew our friends our houses and their furniture, gardens, stables, libraries? But if we do this in the pride of our hearts, as

Hezekiah

Hezekiah did, to gain applause from men, and not giving praise to God, it turns into sin to us, as it did to him.

3. The examination of Hezekiah concerning this matter, *ver. 14, 15.* Isaiah, that had often been his comforter, is now his reprover. The blessed Spirit is both, *John xvi. 7, 8.* Ministers must be both as there is occasion. Isaiah spoke in God's name, and therefore called him to account as one having authority: Who are these? whence come they? what is their business? what have they seen? Hezekiah not only submitted to the examination, did not ask him, what was that to him? what had he to do to question him? but made an ingenious confession. *There is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewn them.* Why then did he not bring them to Isaiah, and shew him to them, who was, without doubt, the best treasure he had in his dominions, and who, by his prayers and prophecies, had been instrumental in all those wonders, which these ambassadors came to inquire into? I hope Hezekiah had the same value for Isaiah now, that he had in his distress; but it had become him to shew it, by bringing these ambassadors to him in the first place, which might have prevented that false step he took.

4. The sentence passed upon him for his pride and vanity, and the too great relish he had for the things of the world, after that intimate acquaintance he had so lately been admitted into with divine things. The sentence is, *ver. 17, 18.* (1.) That the treasures he was so proud of should hereafter become a prey, and his family should be robbed of them all. It is just with God, to take that from us, which we make the matter of our pride, and in which we put our confidence. (2.) That the king of Babylon, he was so fond of an alliance with, should be the enemy that should make a prey of them. Not that it was for this sin that that judgment should be brought upon them: the sins of Manasseh, his idolatries and murders were the cause of that calamity; but it is now foretold to Hezekiah, to convince him of the folly of his pride, and of the value he had for the king of Babylon, and to make him ashamed of it. Hezekiah was fond of assisting the king of Babylon to rise, and to reduce the exorbitant power of the kings of Assyria, but is told, that the snake he is cherishing, will ere long sting the bosom that cherisheth it, and that his royal seed should become the king of Babylon's slaves, which was fulfilled. *Dan. i. 1.* than the thought of which there could not be a greater mortification to Hezekiah. Those that are fond of Babylon, Babylon will be their ruin: Wife therefore and happy are they that come out from her, *Rev. xviii. 4.*

5. Hezekiah's humble and patient submission to this sentence, *ver. 29.* Observe how he argues himself into this submission. (1.) He lays it down for a truth, that good is the word of the Lord, even this word, though a threatening, for every word of his is so. It is not only just but good; for as he doth no wrong to any, so he means no hurt to good men. It is good, for he will bring good out of it, and do me good by the foresight of it. We should believe this concerning every providence, that it is good, is working for good. (2.) He takes notice of that in this word which was good, that he should not live to see this evil, much less to share in it. He makes the best of bad; Is it not good? Yes, certainly it is, and better than I deserve. Note, 1. True penitents, when they are under divine rebukes, call them not only just, but good; not only submit to, but accept of the punishment of their iniquity. So Hezekiah did, and by this it appeared he was indeed humbled for the pride of his heart. When at any time we are under dark dispensations, or have dark prospects, public or personal, we must take notice of what is for us, as well as of what is against us, that we may by thanksgiving honour God, and may in our patience possess our own souls. 3. As to public affairs it is good, and we are bound to think it so, *if peace and truth be in our days.* That is, (1.) Whatever else we want, it is good if we have peace and truth; if we have the true religion professed and protected, bibles and ministers, and enjoy these in peace, not terrified with the alarms of war or persecution. (2.) Whatever trouble may come when we are gone, it is good if all be well in our days. Not that we may be unconcerned for posterity, it is a grief, to foresee evils; but thus far we must own, that the deterring of judgments is a great favour in general; and to have them deferred so long as that we may die in peace, is a particular favour to us, for charity begins at home. We know not how we shall bear the trial, and therefore have reason to think it well, if we may but get safe to heaven before it comes.

Lastly, Here is the conclusion of Hezekiah's life and story, *ver. 20, 21.* In the sacred Chronicles, *lib. 2. chap. xxix. 30,* and 31, much more is recorded of Hezekiah's work of reformation than is in the book of Kings; and it seems in the civil chronicles, not now extant, there were many things recorded of his might, and the good offices he did for Jerusalem, particularly his bringing water by pipes into the city. To have water in plenty, without striving for it, and not terrified with the noise of archers in the drawing of it, to have it at hand, and convenient for us, is to be reckoned a great mercy, for the want of water would be a great calamity. But here this historian leaves him *asleep with his fathers*, and a son in his throne that proved very untoward; for parents cannot give grace to their children. Wicked Abaz was the son of a godly father, and the father of a godly son; holy Hezekiah was the son of a wicked father, and the father of a wicked son. When the land was not reformed, as it should have been, by a good reign, it was plagued and ripened for ruin by a bad one; yet then tried again with a good one, that it might appear how loth God was to cut off his people.

C H A P. XXI.

In this chapter we have a short but sad account of the reigns of two of the kings of Judah, Manasseh and Amon. 1. Concerning Manasseh, all the account we have of him here is, (1.) That he devoted himself to sin, to all manner of wickedness, idolatry, and murder, *ver. 1-9.* and *ver. 16.* (2.) That therefore God devoted him, and Jerusalem for his sake, to ruin, *ver. 10-18.* In the book of Chronicles we have an account of his troubles, and his repentance. 2. Concerning Amon we are only told that he lived in sin, *ver. 19-22.* died quickly by the sword, and left good Josiah his successor, *ver. 23-26.* By these two reigns Jerusalem was much debauched, and much weakened, and so hastened apace towards its destruction, which slumbered not.

1. **M**ANASSEH was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Hephzi-bah. 2. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. 3. For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father

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had destroyed, and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. 4. And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name. 5. And he built altars for all the host of heaven, in the two courts of the house of the LORD. 6. And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits, and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger. 7. And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made, in the house of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever. 8. Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them. 9. But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations, whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel.

How delightful were our meditations on the last reign; how many pleasing views had we of Sion in its glory? that is, in its purity and in its triumphs, of the king in his beauty; It is spoken of Hezekiah, *Isa. xxxiii. 17.* and as it follows there, *ver. 20.* Jerusalem a quiet habitation, because a city of righteousness. *Isa. i. 26.* But now we have a melancholy work upon our hands, unpleasant ground to travel, and cannot but drive heavily. *How is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed!* The beauty of Jerusalem is stained, and all her glory, all her joy sunk and gone. These verses give such an account of this reign, as makes it in all respects the reverse of the last, and in a manner the ruin of it.

1. Manasseh began young: He was but twelve years old when he began to reign, *ver. 1.* born when his father was about forty-two years old, three years after his sickness. If he had sons before, either they were dead, or set by as unpromising. This, as yet he knew no ill by, and therefore hoped for good from, but he proved very bad, and perhaps his coming to the crown to young might help to make it so, which yet will by no means excuse him, for his grandson Josiah came to it younger than he, and yet did very well. But being young, (1.) He was pulled up with his honour, and proud of it; and thinking himself very wise, because he was very great, valued himself upon his undoing what his father had done. It is too common for novices to be lifted up with pride, and so to fall into the condemnation of the devil. (2.) He was easily wrought upon and drawn aside by seducers, that lay in wait to deceive. They that were enemies to Hezekiah's reformation, and retained an affection for the old idolatries, flattered him, and so gained his ear, and used his power at their pleasure. Many have been undone by coming too soon to their honours and estates.

2. He reigned long, longest of any of the kings of Judah fifty-five years. This was the only very bad reign that was a long one; Joram was but eight years, and Ahaz's sixteen; but for Manasseh's, we hope that in the beginning of his reign for some time things went pretty well, in he court that his father left them in; and that in the latter end of his reign, after his repentance, religion got a head again; and no doubt, when things were at the worst, God had his remnant that kept their integrity. Though he reigned long, yet some of this time he was a prisoner in Babylon, which may well be looked upon as a drawback from these years, yet puts in the number, because then he repented, and began to reform.

3. He reigned very ill. (1.) He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and which, having been well educated, he could not but know was so; *ver. 2.* He wrought much wickedness in the sight of the Lord as it were on purpose to provoke him to anger, *ver. 6.* (2.) He did after the abominations of the heathen, *ver. 2.* and as did Ahab, *ver. 3.* not taking warning by the destruction both of the nations of Canaan and the house of Ahab for their idolatry; nay, *ver. 9.* he did more evil than did the nation whom the Lord destroyed. When the holy seed degenerates, they are commonly worse than the worst of the profane.

More particularly, (1.) He rebuilt the high places which his father had destroyed, *ver. 3.* Thus did he trample upon the dust, and affront the memory of his worthy father, though he knew how much he was favoured of God, and honoured of men. It is likely he concurred with Rabshakeh's sentiments, *chap. xviii. 22.* that Hezekiah had done ill to destroy those high places, and pretended the honour of God and the edification and convenience of the people in rebuilding them. This he began with, but proceeded to that which was much worse: For, (2.) He set up other gods, Baal and Ashteroth, (which we translate a grove) and all the host of heaven, the sun and moon, the other planets, and the constellations; these he worshipped and served, *ver. 3.* gave their names to the images he made, and then did homage to them, and prayed for help from them. To these he built altars, *ver. 5.* and offered sacrifices, no doubt, on these altars. (3.) He made his son pass through the fire, by which he dedicated him a votary to Moloch, in contempt of the seal of circumcision by which he had been dedicated to God. (4.) He made the devil his oracle, and in contempt both of Urim and prophecy, he used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits, *ver. 6.* like Saul. Conjurors and fortune tellers, that pretended by the stars or the clouds, lucky and unlucky days, good and bad omens, the flight of birds, or the entrails of beasts, to foretell things to come, were great men with him, his intimates, his confidants; their arts pleased his fancy, and gained his belief, and his counsels were under their direction. (5.) We find afterwards, *ver. 16.* that he shed innocent blood very much in gratification of his own passion and revenge; some, perhaps, were secretly murdered, others taken off by colour of law. Probably much of the blood he shed was theirs that opposed idolatry, and witnessed against it, that would not bow the knee to Baal. The blood of the prophets useth to be in a particular manner charged upon Jerusalem, and it is likely he put to death many of them. The tradition of the Jews is, that he caused the prophet Isaiah to be sawn asunder; and many think the apostle refers to that, *Heb. ix. 37.* where he speaks of those that had so suffered.

Three things are here mentioned as aggravations of Manasseh's idolatry, (1.) That he set up his images and altars in the house of the Lord, *ver. 4.* in the two courts of the temple, *ver. 5.* in the very house of which God had said to Solomon, *Here will I put my name, ver. 7.* Thus he defied God to his face, and impudently affronted him with his rivals under his nose, as

one that was neither afraid of God's wrath, nor ashamed of his own folly and wickedness. Thus he defecrated what had been consecrated to God, and did in effect turn God out of his own house, and put the rebels in possession of it. Thus when the faithful worshippers of God came to the place he had appointed to do their duty to him, to their great grief and terror they found other gods ready to receive their offerings. God had said here he would record his name, here he would put it for ever, and here it was accordingly preserved, while the idolatrous altars were kept at a distance; but Manasseh, by bringing them into God's house, did what he could to alter the property, and to make the name of the God of Israel to be no more in remembrance. (2.) That hereby he put a slight upon the word of God, and his covenant with Israel. The favour he had shewed to that people, in putting his name among them: the kindness he intended them, never to make them move out of that good land, and the reasonableness of his expectations from them, only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, ver. 7, 8. Upon these good terms did Israel stand with God, and had as fair a prospect of being happy as any people could have: But they hearkened not, ver. 9. They would not be kept close to God, neither by his precepts nor by his promises, both were cast behind their back. (3.) That hereby he seduced the people of God, debauched them, and drew them into idolatry, ver. 9. he made Judah to sin, ver. 11. as Jeroboam had made Israel to sin. His very example was enough to corrupt the generality of unthinking people, who would do as their king did, right or wrong. All that aimed at preferment would do as their court did; and others thought it safest to comply, for fear of making their king their enemy. Thus one way or other the holy city became a harlot, and Manasseh made her so. Those will have a great deal to answer for, that not only are wicked themselves, but help to make others so.

10. ¶ And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying, 11. Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols: 12. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle. 13. And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down. 14. And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies, and they shall become a prey, and a spoil to all their enemies: 15. Because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt even unto this day. 16. Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD. 17. ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he sinned, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 18. And Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

Here is the doom of Judah and Jerusalem read, and it is a heavy doom. The prophets were sent in the first place to teach them the knowledge of God, to mind them of their duty, and direct them in it: if they sped not in that, their next work was to reprove them for their sins, and to set them in view before them, that they might repent and reform, and return to their duty. If in this they prevailed not, but sinners went on srowardly, their next work was to foretel the judgments of God, that the terror of them might awaken those to repentance who would not be made sensible of the obligations of his love, or else that the execution of them in their season might be a demonstration of the divine mission of the prophets that foretold them. The prophets were deputed judges to those that would not hear and receive them as teachers. We have here,

(1.) A recital of the crime: the indictment is read upon which the judgment is grounded, ver. 11. Manasseh has done wickedly himself, though he knew better things, has even justified the Amorites, whose copy he wrote after, by outdoing them in impieties, and debauched the people of God, whom he has taught to sin, and forced to sin; and beside that (though that was bad enough) he has filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, ver. 16. has multiplied his murders in every corner of the city, and filled the measure of Jerusalem's blood-guiltiness (Matt. xxii. 32.) up to the brim, and all this against the crown and dignity of the King of kings, the peace of his kingdom, and the statutes in these cases made and provided.

(2.) A prediction of the judgments God would bring upon them for this, *They have done that which was evil, and therefore I am bringing evil upon them*, ver. 12. it will come, and it is not far off. The judgment should be, (1.) Very terrible and amazing, the very report of it should make mens ears to tingle, ver. 12. i. e. their hearts to tremble. It should make a great noise in the world, and occasion many speculations. (2.) It should be copied out (as the sins of Jerusalem had been) from Samaria, and the house of Ahab, ver. 13. when God lays righteousness to the line, it shall be the line of Samaria, measuring out to Jerusalem that which had been the lot of Samaria: when he lays judgment to the plummet, it shall be the plummet of the house of Ahab, marking out for the same ruin to which that wretched family was devoted. See *Ist. xxviii. 17.* Note, Those who resemble and imitate others in their sins, must expect to fare as they fared. (3.) That it should be an utter destruction; *I will wipe it as a man wipes a dish.* This intimates, 1. That every thing should be put into disorder, and their state subverted; they should be turned upside down, and all their foundations put out of course. 2. That the city should be emptied of its inhabitants, which had been the filth of it, as a dish is emptied when it is wiped: They shall all be carried captive, the land shall enjoy her sabbaths, and be laid by as a dish when it is wiped. See the comparison of the boiled pot, not much unlike this, *Ezek. xxiv. 1—4.* 2. That yet this should be in order to the purifying, not the destroying of Jerusalem. The dish shall not be dropi, not broken to pieces, or melted down, but only wiped. This shall be the

fruit, the taking away of the sinners first, and then of the sin. (4.) That therefore they should be destroyed, because they should be deserted, ver. 14. *I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance.* Justly are those that forsake God, forsaken of him; nor doth he ever leave any till they have first left him: but when God has forsaken a people, their defence is departed, and they become a prey, an easy prey to all their enemies. Sin is spoken of here as the alpha and the omega of their miseries. (1.) Old guilt came in remembrance as that which began to fill the measure, ver. 15. *They have provoked me to anger from their conception and birth as a people, since the day their fathers came out of Egypt.* This generation, treading in their father's steps, are justly reckoned with for their father's sins. (2.) The guilt of blood was it that filled the measure, ver. 16. Nothing has a louder cry, nor brings a fierer vengeance than that.

This is all we have here of Manasseh; he stands convicted and condemned; but we hope in the book of Chronicles to hear of his repentance, and acceptance with God. Mean time we must be content in this place to have only one intimation of his repentance (for so we are willing to take it) that he was buried, it is likely by his own order, in the garden of his own house, ver. 18. for being truly humbled for his sins, he judged himself no more worthy to be called a son, a son of David, and therefore not worthy to have even his dead body buried in the sepulchres of his fathers. True penitents take shame to themselves, not honour; yet having lost the credit of an innocent, the credit of a penitent was the next best he was capable of; and better it is and more honourable for a sinner to die repenting, and be buried in a garden; than to die impenitent, and be buried in the abbey.

19. ¶ Amon was twenty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Meshullemeth, the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. 20. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh did. 21. And he walked in all the way that his father served, and worshipped them: 22. And he forsook the LORD God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of the LORD. 23. ¶ And the servants of Amon conspired against him, and slew the king in his own house. 24. And the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon, and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead. 25. Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 26. And he was buried in his sepulchre, in the garden of Uzza: and Josiah his son reigned in his stead.

Here is a short account of the short and inglorious reign of Amon, the son of Manasseh. Whether Manasseh in his blind and brutish zeal for his idols had sacrificed his other sons; or whether, having been dedicated to his idols, they were refused by the people, so it was that his successor was a son not born till he was forty-five years old. And of him we are here told,

1. That his reign was very wicked. *He forsook the God of his fathers*, ver. 22. disobeyed the commands given to his fathers, and disclaimed the covenant made with his fathers, and walked not in the way of the Lord, but in all the way which his fathers walked in, ver. 20, 21. He trod in the steps of his father's idolatry, and revived that which he in the latter end of his days had put down. Note, Those who set bad examples, though they may repent them, yet cannot be sure that those whom they have drawn into sin by their example will repent: it is often otherwise.

2. That his end was very tragical. He having rebelled against God, his own servants conspired against him, and slew him; probably upon some personal disgust, when he had reigned but two years, ver. 23. His servants that should have guarded him, murdered him; his own house that should have been his castle of defence, was the place of his execution. He had profaned God's house with his idols, and now God suffered his own house to be polluted with his blood. How unrighteous soever they were that did it, God was righteous who suffered it to be done.

Two things the people of the land did by their representatives hereupon. 1. They did justice on the traitors that had slain the king, and put them to death; for though he was a bad king, he was their king, and it was a part of their allegiance to him to avenge his death. Thus they cleared themselves from having any hand in the crime, and did what was incumbent on them to deter others from the like villainous practices. 2. They did a kindness to themselves in making Josiah his son king in his stead, whom probably the conspirators had a design to put by: But the people stood by him, and settled him in the throne; encouraged it may be by the indications he gave, even in his early days, of a good disposition. Now they made a happy change from one of the worst to one of the best of all the kings of Judah. Once more, saith God, they shall be tried with a reformation; and if that succeed, well; if not, then after that I will cut them down. Amon was buried in the same garden where his father was, ver. 26. If his father put himself under that humiliation, the people will put him under it.

C H A P. XXII.

This chapter begins the story of the reign of good king Josiah, whose goodness shines the brighter, because it came just after so much wickedness, which he had the honour to reform; and just before so great a destruction, which yet he had not the honour to prevent. Here, after his general character, ver. 1, 2. we have a particular account of the respect he paid, (1.) To God's house, which he repaired, ver. 3—7. (2.) To God's book, which he was much affected with the reading of, ver. 8—11. (3.) To God's messengers, whom he thereupon consulted, ver. 12—14. And by whom he received from God an answer, threatening Jerusalem's destruction, ver. 15—17. but promising favour to him, ver. 18—20. Upon which he set about that glorious work of reformation which we have an account of in the next chapter.

1. Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah of Boscath. 2. And he did that which was right in

in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. 3. ¶ And it came to pass in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, that the king sent Shaphan, the son of Azubiah, the son of Meshullam, the scribe, to the house of the LORD, saying, 4. Go up to Hilkiah the high priest, that he may sum the silver which is brought into the house of the LORD, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people. 5. And let them deliver it into the hand of the doers of the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD: and let them give it to the doers of the work which is in the house of the LORD, to repair the breaches of the house, 6. Unto carpenters, and builders, and masons, and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. 7. Howbeit, there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand, because they dealt faithfully. 8. ¶ And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD: and Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it. 9. And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD. 10. And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book: and Shaphan read it before the king.

Concerning Josiah we are told,

1. That he was very young when he began to reign, *ver. 1.* but eight years old. Solomon saith, *If unto thee, O land, When thy king is a child;* but happy art thou, O land, when thy king is such a child. Our English Israel had once a king that was such a child, Edward VI. Josiah being young, had not received any bad impressions from the example of his father and grandfather, but soon saw their errors, and God gave him grace to take warning by them. See *Ez. k. xviii. 14, &c.*

2. That he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, *ver. 1.* See the sovereignty of divine grace; the father passed by, and left to perish in his sin; the son a chosen vessel. See the triumphs of that grace; Josiah, born of a wicked father, no good education, nor good example given him, but many about him, who, no doubt, advised him to tread in his father's steps, and few that gave him any good counsel; and yet the grace of God makes him an eminent saint, *cuts him off from the wild olive, and grafts him into the good olive, Rom. xi. 24.* Nothing is too hard for that grace to do. He walked in a good way, and turned not aside (as some of his predecessors had done who began well) to the right hand or to the left: there are errors on both hands, but God kept him in the right way, he fell not either into superstition or profaneness.

3. That he took care for the repair of the temple. This he did in the eighteenth year of his reign, *ver. 3.* compare *2 Chron. xxxiv. 8.* He began much sooner to seek the Lord, as appears, *2 Chron. xxxiv. 3.* but it is to be feared the work of reformation went slowly on, and met with much opposition, so that he could not effect what he desired and designed till his power was thoroughly confirmed. It should quicken us when we come to years, to act with so much the more vigour in the service of God, to consider how much time we unavoidably lost in our minority. Having begun late, we had need work hard; he sent Shaphan, the secretary of state, to Hilkiah the high priest, to take an account of the money that was collected for this use by the door-keepers, *ver. 4.* for it seems that they took much the same way of raising money that Josiah took, *chap. xii. 9.* When people gave by a little at a time the burden was insensible, and giving by a voluntary contribution it was not complained of. This money so collected he ordered him to lay out for the repair of the temple, *ver. 5, 6.* And now it seems the workmen (as in the days of Josiah) acquitted themselves so well, that there was no reckoning made with them, *ver. 7.* which is certainly mentioned to the praise of the workmen, that they gained such a reputation for honesty, but whether to the praise of those that employed them I know not; a man should count money (we say) after his own father; it had not been amiss to have reckoned with the workmen, that others also might be satisfied of their honesty.

4. That in the repairing of the temple the book of the law was happily found and brought to the king, *ver. 8—10.* Some think it was the autograph, or original manuscript of the five books of Moses, under his own hand; others think it was only an ancient and authentic copy; most likely it was that which by the command of Moses was laid up in the most holy place, *Deut. xxxi. 24, &c.*

1. It seems this book of the law was lost and missing, either it was carelessly mislaid and neglected, thrown by into a corner, (as some throw their Bibles) by those that knew not the value of it, and forgotten there, or it was maliciously concealed by some of the idolatrous kings, or their agents, who were restrained by the providence of God or their own consciences from burning and destroying it, but buried it, in hopes it would never see the light again, or (as some think) it was carefully laid up by some of its friends, lest it should fall into the hands of its enemies; whoever were the instruments of its preservation we ought to acknowledge the hand of God in it; if this was the only authentic copy of the Pentateuch then in being, which had, (as I may say) so narrow a turn for its life, and was so near perishing, I wonder the hearts of all good people did not tremble for that sacred treasure, as Eli's for the ark, and am sure we now have reason to thank God upon our knees for that happy providence by which Hilkiah found this book at this time, found it when he sought it not, *Ila. lxxv. 1.* If the holy scriptures had not been of God, they had not been in being at this day; God's care of the Bible, is a plain indication of his interest in it.

2. Whether this was the only authentic copy in being or no; it seems, the things contained in it were new, both to the king himself and to the high priest, for the king upon the reading of it rent his clothes; we have reason to think the command for the king's writing a copy of the law, and that for the public reading of the law every seventh year, *Deut. xvii. 18, xxxi. 10, 11.* had neither of them being observed of a long time, and when the instituted means of keeping up religion are neglected, religion itself will soon go to decay; yet, on the other hand, if the book of the law was lost,

it is wondered what rule Josiah went by in doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and how the priests and people kept up the rites of their religion: truly, I am apt to think, that the people generally took up with abstracts of the law, like our abridgments of the statutes, which the priests, to save themselves the trouble of writing, and the people of reading the book at large, had furnished them with a sort of ritual, directing them in the observances of their religion, but leaving out what they thought fit, and particularly the promises and threatenings, *Lev. xxvi. and Deut. xxviii. &c.* for I observe, that those were the portions of the law which Josiah was so much affected with, *ver. 13.* for those were new to him; no summaries, extracts, or collections out of the Bible, (though they may have their use) can be effectual to convey and preserve the knowledge of God and his will like the Bible itself; it was no marvel that the people were so corrupt, when the book of the law was such a scarce thing among them; where that vision is not, the people perish; they that endeavoured to debase them, no doubt, used all the arts they could to get that book out of their hands; the Church of Rome could not keep up the use of images, but by forbidding the use of the scripture.

3. It was a great instance of God's favour, and a token for good to Josiah and his people, that the book of the law was thus seasonably brought to light, to direct and quicken that blessed reformation which Josiah had begun; it is a sign God has mercy in store for a people, when he magnifies his law among them, and makes that honourable, and furnishes them with means for the increase of scripture knowledge; the translating of the scriptures into vulgar tongues, was the glory, strength, and joy of the Reformation from Popery. And, it is observable, they were about a good work, repairing the temple, when they found the book of the law; they that do their duty according to their knowledge, shall have their knowledge increased; to him that has, shall be given; the book of the law was an abundant recompence for all their care and cost about the repair of the temple.

4. Hilkiah, the priest was exceedingly pleased with the discovery; O, saith he to Shaphan, *Rejice with me, for I have found the book of the law, &c.* I have found, I have found that jewel of inestimable value; here, carry it to the king, it is the richest jewel of his crown, read it before him; he walks in the way of David his father, and it be like him, he will love the book of the law, and bid that welcome, that will be his delight and his counsellor.

11. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes. 12. And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and Achbor, the son of Micajah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asahiah a servant of the king, saying, 13. Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to do according unto all that which is written concerning us. 14. So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum, the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college) and they communed with her. 15. ¶ And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me, 16. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read. 17. Because they have forsaken me, and have burnt incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. 18. But to the king of Judah which sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, As touching the words which thou hast heard; 19. Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me: I also have heard thee, saith the LORD, 20. Behold, therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace, and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

We hear no more of the repairing of the temple; no doubt, that good work went on well, but the book of the law that was found in it fills us now, and well it may: it is not laid up in the king's cabinet as a piece of antiquity, a rarity to be admired, but it is read before the king; those put the truest honour upon their Bibles that study them, and converse with them daily, feed on that bread, and walk by that light; men of honour and business may look upon an acquaintance with God's word to be their best business and honour.

Now here we have,

1. The impressions which the reading of the law made upon Josiah; he rent his clothes, as one ashamed of the sin, of his people, and afraid of the wrath of God; he had long thought the case of the kingdom bad, by reason of the idolatries and impieties that had been found among them, but he never thought it so bad as he perceived it to be, by the book of the law now read to him; the rending of his clothes signified the rending of his heart for the dishonour done to God, and the ruin he saw coming upon his people.

2. The application he made to God hereupon, *Go inquire of the Lord for me, ver. 13.* Inquire, (1.) What we shall do; what course we shall take to turn away God's wrath, and prevent the judgments which our sins have deserved; convictions of sin and wrath should put us upon this inquiry, *What shall*

shall we do to be saved? where will we become before the Lord? If ye will thus inquire, inquire quickly, before it be too late. (2.) What we may expect, and must provide for; he acknowledgeth our fathers have not hearkened to the words of this book; if this be the rule of right, certainly our fathers have been much in the wrong; now the commandment came forth renewed, and appeared sin; in the glass of the law, he saw the sins of his people more numerous and most heinous than he had before seen them, and more exceeding sinful. He infers from hence certainly, great is the wrath that is kindled against us; if this be the word of God, as no doubt it is, and he will be true to his word, as no doubt he will be, we are all undone; I never thought the threatenings of the law so severe, and the curses of the covenant so terrible as now I find them to be; it is time to look about us if these be in force against us. Note, Those who are truly apprehensive of the weight of God's wrath, cannot but be very solicitous to obtain his favour, and inquisitive how they make their peace with him; magistrates should inquire for their people, and study how to prevent the judgments of God that they see hanging over them.

This inquiry Josiah sent, 1. By some of his great men, who are named, ver. 12. again, ver. 14. Thus he put an honour upon the oracle, by employing those of the first rank to attend it. 2. To Huldah the prophetess, ver. 14. The spirit of prophecy, that inestimable treasure, was sometimes put not only into the earthen vessels, but into the weaker vessels, *that the excellency of the power might be of God.* Miriam had helped to lead Israel out of Egypt, *Micah vi.* 4. Deborah judgeth them, and now Huldah instructed them in the mind of God: and her being a wife was no prejudice at all to her being a prophetess, *marriage is honourable in all*: It was a mercy to Jerusalem, that when Bibles were scarce, they had prophets, as that afterwards when prophecy ceased, they had more plenty of Bibles, for God never leaves himself without witness, because he will leave sinners without excuse. Jeremiah and Zephaniah prophesied at this time, yet the king's messengers made Huldah their oracle, probably, because her husband having a place at court, for he was keeper of the wardrobe, they had more and longer acquaintance with her, and greater assurance of her commission than of any other; they had, it is likely, consulted her upon other occasions, and had found the word of God in her mouth was truth; she was near, for she dwelt at Jerusalem, in a place called Mishneh, the second rank of buildings from the royal palace; the Jews say, she prophesied among the women, the court ladies, being herself one of them, who, it is probable, had their apartments in that place; happy the court that had a prophetess within the verge of it, and knew how to value her.

3. The answer he received from God to his inquiry; Huldah returned it not in the language of a courtier, Pray give my humble service to his majesty, and let him know that this is the message I have sent him from the God of Israel, but in the dialect of a prophetess (speaking from him before whom all stand upon the same level), *Tell the man that sent you to me*, ver. 15. even kings, though gods to us, are men to God, and shall so be dealt with, for with him there is no respect of persons.

(1.) She lets him know what judgments God had in store for Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 16, 17. *My wrath shall be kindled against this place, and what is hell itself, but the fire of God's wrath kindled against sinners?* Observe the degree and duration of it, it is so kindled that *it shall not be quenched*, the degree is gone forth, it is too late now to think of preventing it, the iniquity of Jerusalem shall not be purged with sacrifice or offering. Hell is unquenchable fire: and the reference it has, 1. To their sins, which they have committed, as it were, with design and on purpose to provoke me to anger, it is a fire of their own kindling; they would provoke me, and I am provoked at length. 2. To God's threatening; the evil I bring is just, according to the words of the book which the king of Judah has read, the scripture is fulfilled in it, they that would not be bound by the precept shall be bound by the penalty; God will be found no less terrible to impertinent sinners, than his word makes him to be.

(2.) She lets him know what mercy God has in store for him. 1. Notice is taken of his great tenderness and concern for the glory of God, and the welfare of his kingdom, ver. 19. *Thine heart was tender.* Note, Those that distinguish themselves, God will distinguish them; the generality of the people were hardened, and their hearts unhumiliated, so were the wicked kings his predecessors; but Josiah's heart was tender, he received the impressions of God's word, trembled at it, and yielded to it; he was exceedingly grieved for the dishonour done to God by the sins of his fathers; and of his people, he was afraid of the judgments of God which he saw coming upon Jerusalem, and earnestly deprecated them; this is tenderness of heart, and thus humbled himself before the Lord, and expressed these pious affections by rending his clothes, and weeping before God, probably, in his closet; but he that sees in secret faith it was before him, and heard it, and put every tear of tenderness into his bottle. Note, Those that most fear God's wrath, are least likely to feel it; it should seem, those words, *Lev. xxvii. 32.* much afflicted Josiah, *I will bring the land into desolation*, for when he heard of the desolation and of the curse, i. e. that God would forsake them, and separate them to evil (for till it came to that they were neither desolate nor accursed) then he rent his clothes, that went to his heart. 2. A reprieve is granted till after his death, ver. 20. *I will gather thee to thy fathers.* The saints then, no doubt, had a comfortable prospect of happiness on the other side death, else being gathered to their fathers would not have been often made the matter of a promise as we find it was. Josiah could not prevail to prevent the judgment itself, but God promised him he should not live to see it, which especially considering that he died in the midst of his days, (before he was forty years old) would have been but a small reward for his eminent piety, if there was not another world in which he should be abundantly recompensed, *Heb. xi. 16.* When the righteous is taken away from the evil to come, he enters into peace, *Isa. lvii. 1, 2.* This is promised to Josiah here, *Thou shalt go to thy grave in peace*; which refers not to the manner of his death, for he was killed in a battle, but to the time of it, it was a little before the captivity in Babylon, that greater trouble, in comparison with which the rest were as nothing, so that he might be truly said to die in peace, that did not live to share in that; he died in the love and favour of God, which secure such a peace as no circumstance of dying, no, not dying in the field of war, could alter the nature of or break in upon.

C H A P. XXIII.

We have here, (1.) The happy continuance of the goodness of Josiah's reign, and the progress of the reformation he begun, reading the law, ver. 1, 2. renewing the covenant, ver. 3. cleansing the temple, ver. 4. and rooting out idols and idolatry, with all the relics thereof, in all places as far as his power reached, ver. 5—20. keeping a solemn passover, ver. 21—23. and clearing the country of witches, ver. 24. and in all this acting with extraordinary vigour, ver. 25. (2.) The unhappy conclusion of it in his untimely death, as a token of the continuance of God's wrath against Jerusalem, ver. 26—30. (3.) The more unhappy consequences of his

death, in the bad reigns of his two sons Jehohaz and Jehoiakim, that came after him; ver. 31—37.

1. **A**ND the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah, and of Jerusalem. 2. And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests and the prophets, and all the people both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD. 3. ¶ And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes with all their heart and all their soul, to perform the words of this covenant, that were written in this book: and all the people stood to the covenant.

Josiah had received a message from God that there was no preventing the ruin of Jerusalem, but he only should deliver his own soul; yet he did not therefore sit down in despair, and resolve to do nothing for his country, because he cannot do all he would, no, he will do his duty, and then leave the event to God; a public reformation is the thing resolved on, if any thing prevent the threatened ruin it must be that, and here we have the preparations for that reformation.

1. He summoned a great assembly of the states, the elders, the magistrates or representatives of Judah and Jerusalem, to meet him in the house of the Lord, with the priests and prophets, the ordinary and extraordinary ministers, that they all joining in it, it might become a national act, and so the more likely to prevent national judgments; they were all called to attend, ver. 1, 2. that the business might be done with more solemnity, that they might all advise and assist in it, and that those who were against it might be discouraged from making any opposition; parliaments are no diminution at all to the honour and power of good princes, but a great support to it.

2. Instead of making a speech to this convention, he ordered the book of the law to be read to them, nay, it should seem he read it himself, ver. 2. as one much affected with it, and desirous that they should be so too: Josiah thinks it not below him to be a reader, no more than Solomon did to be a preacher, nay, and David himself to be a door keeper in the house of God: besides the convention of the great men, he had a congregation of the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to hear the law read: it is really the interest of princes to promote the knowledge of the scriptures in their dominions. If the people be but as steadfastly resolved to obey law, as he is to govern by law, the kingdom will be happy; all people are concerned to know the scripture, and all in authority to spread the knowledge of it.

3. Instead of proposing laws for the confirming of them in their duty, he proposed an association, by which they should all jointly engage themselves to God, ver. 3. The book of the law was the book of the covenant, that if they would be to God a people, he would be to them a God; they here engage themselves to do their part, not doubting but then God would do his. (1.) The covenant was, that they should walk after the Lord, in compliance with his will, in his ordinances and providences, should answer all his calls, and attend all his motions; that they should make conscience of all his commandments, moral, ceremonial, and judicial, should carefully observe them with all their heart and all their soul, with all possible care and caution, sincerity, vigour, courage, and resolution, and to fulfil the conditions of this covenant, in dependence upon the promises of it. (2.) The covenanters were, the king himself in the first place, who stood by his pillar, chap. xi. 14. and publicly declared his consent to this covenant, to set them an example, and to assure them not only of his protection, but of his presidency, and all the furtherance his power could give them in their obedience; it is no abridgment of the liberty even of princes themselves to be in bonds to God: *All the people likewise stood to the covenant, i. e.* they signified their consent to it, and promised to abide by it; it is of good use with all possible solemnity to oblige ourselves to our duty, and it is especially seasonable after notorious backsliding to sin, and decays in that which is good; he that bears an honest mind doth not startle at assurances; fast bind, fast find.

4. And the king commanded Hilkiah, the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD, all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burnt them without Jerusalem, in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Beth-el. 5. And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places, in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem, them also that burnt incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven. 6. And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burnt it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people. 7. And he brake down the houses of the sodomites that were by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove. 8. And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burnt incense, from Geba to Beer-sheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that were in the entering in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on a man's left hand at the gate of the city. 9. Nevertheless, the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among

among their brethren. 10. And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech. 11. And he took away the horses that the king of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burnt the chariots of the sun with fire. 12. And the waters that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron. 13. And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile. 14. And he brake in pieces the images and cut down their groves, and filled their places with the bones of men. 15. ¶ Moreover, the altar that was at Beth-el, and the high places which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burnt the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burnt the grove. 16. And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that were there in the mount, and sent and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burnt them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. 17. Then he said, What title is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Beth-el. 18. And he said, Let him alone, let no man move his bones: so they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophets that came out of Samaria. 19. And all the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he hath done in Beth-el. 20. And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there upon the altars, and burnt men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem. 21. ¶ And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the LORD your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant. 22. Surely there was not holden such a passover, from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah: 23. But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, wherein this passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem. 24. ¶ Moreover, the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah, and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law, which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

We have here an account of such a reformation as we have not met with in all the history of the kings of Judah, such thorough riddance made of all the abominable things, and such foundations laid of a glorious good work; and here I cannot but wonder at two things, (1.) That so many wicked things should be got in, and kept standing so long, as we find here removed. (2.) That notwithstanding the removal of those wicked things, and the hopeful prospects here given of a happy settlement, yet within a few years Jerusalem was utterly destroyed, and even this did not save it, for the generality of the people, after all hated to be reformed. *The founder melteth in vain, and therefore reprobate silver shall men call them,* Jer. vi. 29, 30.

Let us here observe,

1. What abundance of wickedness there was and had been in Judah and Jerusalem, one would not have believed it possible that in Judah, where God was known; in Israel, where his name was great; in Salem, in Zion, where his dwelling place was, such abominations should be found as here we have an account of; Josiah had now reigned eighteen years, and had himself set the people a good example, and kept up religion according to law, and yet, when he came to make inquisition for idolatry, it is incredible the depth and extent of the dunghill he had to carry away.

(1.) Even in the house of the Lord, that sacred temple which Solomon built, and dedicated to the honour and for the worship of the God of Israel, there were found vessels, all manner of utensils for the worship of Baal, and of the grove (or Ashtoreth) and of all the host of heaven, ver. 4. Though Josiah had suppressed the worship of idols, yet the provisions made for that worship were all carefully preserved, even in the temple itself, to be used again whenever the present restraint should be taken off; nay, even the grove itself, the image of it, was yet standing in the temple, ver. 6. some make it the image of Venus, the same with Ashtoreth.

(2.) Just at the entering in of the house of the Lord was a stable for horses kept, (would you think it?) for a religious use, they were holy horses, given to the sun, ver. 11. as he if needed them, who rejoiceth as a strong man

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to run a race, Psalm xix. 5. or rather they would thus represent to themselves the swiftness of his motion, which they much admired, making their religion to conform to the poetical fictions of the chariot of the sun, the follies of which, even a little philosophy, without any divinity, would have exposed and made them ashamed of. Some say, those horses were to be led forth in pomp every morning to meet the rising sun; others, that the worshippers of the sun rode out upon them to adore the rising sun; it should seem they drew the chariots of the sun, which the people worshipped; strange, that ever men that had the written word of God among them, should be thus vain in their imaginations!

(3.) Hard by the house of the Lord there were houses of the Sodomites, where all manner of lewdness and filthiness, even that which was most unnatural was practised, and under pretence of religion in honour of their impure deities; corporal and spiritual whoredom went together, and the vile affections which they were given up to, were the punishment of their vain imaginations; they that dishonoured their God, were justly left thus to dishonour themselves, Rom. i. 24, &c. There were women that wore hangings for the grove, ver. 7. tents which encompassed the image of Venus, where the worshippers committed all manner of lewdness, and this in the house of the Lord; they did ill that made our Father's house a house of merchandise, they did worse that made it a den of thieves, but those did worst of all that made it (*Horrendum dictu!*) a perfect bawdy-house, in an impudent defiance of the holiness of God and his temple; well might the apostle call them abominable idolatries.

(4.) There were many idolatrous altars found, ver. 12. some in the palace, on the top of the chamber of Ahaz, the roofs of their houses being flat, they made them their high places, and set up altars upon them, Jer. xix. 13. Zeph. i. 5. domestic altars; the kings of Judah did so: and though Josiah ever used them, yet to this time they remained there; Manasseh had built altars for his idols in the house of the Lord, when he repented he removed them, and cast them out of the city, 2 Chron xxxiii. 15. but not destroying them, his son Amon, it seems, had brought them again into the courts of the temple, there Josiah found them, and thence he broke them down, ver. 12.

(5.) There was Tophet, in the valley of the son of Hinnom, very near Jerusalem, where the image of Molech (that God of unnatural cruelty, as others were of unnatural uncleanness) was kept, to which he sacrificed their children, burning them in the fire, others dedicated them, making them to pass through the fire, ver. 10. labouring in the very fire, Hab. iii. 13. It is supposed to be called Tophet from *toph*, a drum, because they beat drums at the burning of the children, that their shrieks might not be heard.

(6.) There were high places before Jerusalem, which Solomon had built, ver. 13. The altars and images on those high places, we may suppose, had been taken away by some of the preceding godly kings, or, perhaps, Solomon himself had removed them when he became a penitent, but the buildings, or some parts of them remained, with other high places of Josiah's time. They that introduce corruptions into religion, know not how far they will reach, nor how long they will last, antiquity is no certain proof of verity; there were also high places all the kingdom over, from Geba to Beer Sheba, ver. 8. and high places of the gates, in the entering in of the gate of the governor; in those high places (Bishop Patrick thinks) they burnt incense to those tutelary gods; to whom their idolatrous kings had committed the protection of their city; and probably the governor of the city had a private altar for his Penates, his household gods.

(7.) There were idolatrous priests, that officiated at all those idolatrous altars, ver. 5. Chemarim, black men, or that wore black, see Zeph. i. 5. they that sacrificed to Osiris, or that wept for Tamouz, Ezek. vii. 14. or that worshipped the infernal deities, put on black garments as mourners. Those idolatrous priests, the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places; it should seem, they were priests of the house of Aaron, who thus profaned their dignity, and there were others also who had no right at all to the priesthood that burnt incense to Baal.

(8.) There were conjurors and wizards, and such as dealt with familiar spirits, ver. 24. When they worshipped the devil as their god, no marvel, they consulted him as their oracle.

9. What a full distrust on good Josiah made of all those relics of idolatry, such is his zeal for the Lord of hosts, and his holy indignation against all that is displeasing to him, that nothing shall stand before him; the law was, that the monuments of the Canaanites idolatry must be all destroyed, Deut. vii. 5. much more of the idolatry of the Israelites, in whom it was much more impious, profane and perfidious.

1. He orders Hilkiah and the other priests to clear the temple, that was their province, ver. 4. away with all the vessels that were made for Baal, they must never be employed in the service of God, no, nor reserved for any common use, they must all be burnt, and the ashes of them carried to Bethel, that place had been the common source of idolatry, for there was set up one of the calves, and that lying next to Judah, from thence the infection had spread into that kingdom, and therefore now he makes it the laystall of idolatry, the dunghill to which he carries the filth and off-scouring of all things, that if possible, it might be made loathsome to those that had been fond of it.

2. The idolatrous priests were all put down, those of them that were not of the house of Aaron, or had sacrificed to Baal, or other false gods, he put to death, according to the law, ver. 20. he slew them upon their own altars, the most acceptable sacrifice that had ever been offered upon them, a sacrifice to the justice of God; those that were descendants from Aaron, and yet had burned incense in the high places, but to the true God only, he forbade them ever to approach the altar of the Lord, they had forfeited that honour, ver. 9. he brought them out of the cities of Judah, ver. 8. that they might not do mischief in the country by secretly keeping up their old idolatrous usages; but he allowed them to eat of the unleavened bread, (the bread of the meat-offering, Lev. ii. 4, 5.) among their brethren, with whom they were to reside, that being under their eye they might be kept from doing hurt, and taught to do well; that bread, that unleavened bread (heavy and unpleasant as it was) was better than they deserved, and that would serve to keep them alive; but whether they were permitted to eat of all the sacrifices, as blest priests were, Lev. xxi. 22. which is called in general the bread of their God, may be justly questioned.

4. All the images were broken to pieces and burnt, the image of the grove, ver. 6. some goddess or other was reduced to ashes, and the ashes cast upon the graves of the common people, ver. 6. the common burying-place of the city; by the law a ceremonial uncleanness was contracted by a touch of a grave, so that in casting them here he declared them most impure, and none could touch them but they must make themselves unclean by it; he cast it into the graves, so the Chaldees, intimating that he would have all idolatry buried, out of his sight, as a loathsome thing, and forgotten, as dead men are out of mind, ver. 14. he filled the places of the groves with the bones of men; as he carried the ashes of the images to the graves, to mingle them with dead mens bones, so he carried dead mens bones to the places where the images had been, and put them in the room of them, that both ways idolatry might be rendered loathsome, and the people kept both from the

dest of the images; and from the ruins of the places where they had been worshipped; dead men and dead gods were much alike, and fittest to go together.

4. All the naughty houses were suppressed, those nests of impiety that harboured idolaters, the houses of the sodomites, *ver. 7.* down with them, down with them, rase them to the foundations; the high places were in like manner broken down, and levelled with the ground, *ver. 8.* even that which belonged to the governor of the city, for no man's greatness or power may protect him in idolatry or profaneness; let governors be obliged in the first place to reform, and then the governed will be the sooner influenced; he defiled the high places, *ver. 8.* and again, *ver. 13.* did all he could to render them abominable, and put the people out of conceit with them, as Jehu did when he made the house of Baal a draught-house, or jakes, *2 Kings x. 27.* Tophet, (which contrary to other places of idolatry, was in a valley, whereas they were on hills or high-places) was likewise defiled, *ver. 10.* was made the burying-places of the city; concerning this we have a whole sermon, *Jer. xix. 1, 2, &c.* where it is said, they shall bury in Tophet, and the whole city is threatened to be made like Tophet.

5. The horses that had been given to the sun were taken away, and put to common use, and so were delivered from the vanity to which they were made subje. 6; and the chariots of the sun (what pity was it that those horses and chariots should be kept as the chariots and horsemen of Israel) be burnt with fire; and if the sun be a flame, they never resembled him so as they did when they were chariots of fire.

6. The workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards were put away, *ver. 24.* Those of them that were convicted of witchcraft, it is likely, he put to death, and so deterred others from those diabolical practices; in all this, he had a sincere regard to the words of the law which were written in the book lately found, *ver. 24.* he made that his rule, and kept that in his eye throughout this reformation.

3. How his zeal extended itself to the cities of Israel that were within his reach; the ten tribes were carried captive, the Assyrian colonies did not fully people the country, so that it is likely, many cities had put themselves under the protection of the kings of Judah, *2 Chron. xxx. 1. xxxiv. 6.* whom he here visits to carry on his reformation there; as far as our influence goes, our endeavours should go to do good, and bring the wickedness of the wicked to an end.

(1.) He defiled and demolished Jeroboam's altar at Bethel, with the high places, and the grove that belonged to it, *ver. 15, 16.* the golden calf, it should seem, was gone, (*Thy calf, O Samaria, has cast thee off.*) but the altar was there, which those that were wedded to their old idolatries made use of still; this was, 1. Defiled, *ver. 16.* Josiah in his pious zeal, was ransacking the old seats of idolatry, and spied the sepulchres in the mount, in which, probably, the idolatrous priests were buried, not far from the altar at which they had officiated, and which they were so fond of, that they were desirous to lay their bones by it, these he opened, took out the bones and burnt them upon the altar, to shew that thus he would have done by the priests themselves if they had been alive, as he did by those whom he found alive, *ver. 20.* thus he polluted the altar, defecrated it, and made it odious; it is threatened against idolaters, *Jer. viii. 1, 2.* that their bones shall be spread before the sun; that there threatened, and this here executed, which speaks their iniquity to be upon their bones, *Ezek. xxxii. 27.* is an intimation of a punishment after death, reserved for those that live and die impenitent, in that or any other sin; the burning of the bones, if that were all, is a small matter, but if it signifies the torment of the soul in a worse flame, *Luke xvi. 24.* it is very dreadful. This, as it was Josiah's act, seems to be the result of a very sudden resolve, he had not done it, but that he happened to turn himself and spy the sepulchres, and yet it was foretold above three hundred and fifty years before, when this altar was first built by Jeroboam, *1 Kings xiii. 2.* God always foresees, and has sometimes foretold as certain, that which yet to us seems most contingent; *the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord:* king Josiah's was so, and he turned it (or ever he himself was aware, *Cant. vi. 12.*) to do this; no word of God shall fall to the ground. 2. It was demolished, he broke down the altar and all its appurtenances, *ver. 15.* burnt what was combustible, and since an idol is nothing in the world, he went as far towards the annihilating of it as possibly he could, for he stamped it small to powder, and made it as dust before the wind.

(2.) He destroyed all the houses of the high places, all those synagogues of Satan that were in the cities of Samaria, *ver. 19.* these the kings of Israel built, and God raised up this king of Judah to pull them down, for the honour of the ancient house of David, from which the ten tribes had revolted; the priests he justly made sacrifices upon their own altars, *ver. 20.*

(3.) He carefully preserved the sepulchre of that man of God which came from Judah to foretel this, which now a king which came from Judah executed; this was that good prophet who proclaimed these things against the altar of Bethel, and yet was himself slain by a lion for disobeying the word of the Lord; but to shew that God's displeasure against him went no farther than his death, but ended there, God so ordered it, that when all the graves about his were disturbed, his was safe, *ver. 17, 18.* and no man moved his bones, he was entered into peace, and therefore shall rest in his bed, *Iju. lvii. 2.* The old lying prophet, who desired to be buried as near to him as might be, it should seem knew what he did, for his dust also being mingled with that of the good prophet, was preserved for his sake, see *Numb. xxiii. 10.*

Lastly, We are told what a solemn passover Josiah and his people kept after all this; when they had cleared the country of the old leaven, then they applied themselves to the keeping of the feast; when Jehu had destroyed the worship of Baal, yet he took no heed to walk in the commandments and ordinances of God, but Josiah considered that we must learn to do well, and not only cease to do evil; and that the way to keep out all abominable customs, is to keep up all instituted ordinances, see *Lev. xviii. 30.* and therefore he commanded all the people to keep the passover, which was not only a memorial of their deliverance out of Egypt, but a token of their dedication to him that brought them out, and their communion with him; this he found written in the book of the law, here called the book of the covenant; for though the divine authority may deal with us in a way of absolute command, divine grace condescends to federal transactions, and therefore he observed it. We have not such a particular account of this passover as of that in Hezekiah's time, *2 Chron. xxx.* but in general that there was not holden such a passover in any of the foregoing reigns, no not from the days of the judges, *ver. 22.* which, by the way, intimates, that though the account which the book of Judges gives of the state of Israel under that dynasty looks but melancholy, yet there was then some golden days. This passover, it seems, was extraordinary, for the number and devotion of the communicants, their sacrifices and offerings, and their exact observance of the laws of the feast; and it was not now as in Hezekiah's passover, when many communicated that were not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary, and the Levites were permitted to do the priests work. We have reason to think that during all the remainder of Josiah's reign religion flourished, and the feasts of the Lord were very carefully observed, but in

his passover the satisfaction they took in the covenant lately renewed, the reformation in pursuance of it, and the revival of an ordinance which they had lately found the divine original of in the book of the law, and which had long been neglected or flattered over, put them into mighty transports of holy joy; and God was pleased to recompense their zeal in destroying idolatry, with uncommon tokens of his presence and favour; all this concurred to make it such a passover as there had not been the like.

25. And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

26. ¶ Notwithstanding, the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal. 27. And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem, which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there. 28. Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 29. ¶ In his days Pharaoh-nechoh king of Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him, and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him. 30. And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried them in his own sepulchre; and the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead.

Upon the reading of these verses we must say, Lord, though thy righteousness be as the great mountains, evident and conspicuous, and past dispute, yet thy judgments are a great deep, unfathomable, and past finding out, *Psal. xxxvi. 6.* What shall we say to this?

1. It is here owned Josiah was one of the best kings that ever sat upon the throne of David, *ver. 25.* As Hezekiah was a nonsuch for faith and dependence upon God in straits, *2 Kings xviii. 5.* Josiah was a nonsuch for sincerity and zeal in carrying on a work of reformation. For this there was none like him, (1.) That he turned to the Lord, from whom his fathers had revolted. It is true religion to turn to God as one we have chosen and love. He did what he could to turn his kingdom also to the Lord. (2.) That he did this with his heart and soul; his affections and aims were right in what he did. Those make nothing of their religion, that do not make heart-work of it. (3.) That he did it with all his heart, and all his soul, and all his might; with vigour, and courage, and resolution: he could not otherwise have broke through the difficulties he had to grapple with. What great things may we bring to pass in the service of God, if we be but lively and hearty in it; (4.) That he did this according to the law of Moses; in an exact observance of that law, and with an actual regard to it. His zeal did not transport him into any irregularities, but in all he did he walked by rule.

2. Notwithstanding this, he was cut off by a violent death, in the midst of his days, and his kingdom was ruined within a few years after. Consequent upon such a reformation as this, one would have expected nothing but the prosperity and glory both of king and kingdom; but, quite contrary, we find both under a cloud.

1. Even the reformed kingdom continues marked for ruin. For all this, *ver. 26.* The Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath. That is certainly true which God spake by the prophet, *Jer. xviii. 7, 8.* That if a nation doomed to destruction turn from the evil of sin, God will repent of the evil of punishment; and therefore we must conclude that Josiah's people, though they submitted to Josiah's power, yet did not heartily imbrace Josiah's principles. However they were turned by force, they did not voluntarily turn from their evil way, but still continued their affection for their idols; and therefore he that knows men's hearts would not recal the sentence, which was, that Judah should be removed, as Israel had been, and Jerusalem itself cast off, *ver. 37.* Yet even this destruction was intended to be their effectual reformation; so that we must say not only that the criminals had sinned their measure, and were ripe for ruin, but rather that the disease was come to a crisis, and was ready for a cure; and this shall be all the fruit, even the taking away of sin.

2. As an evidence of this, even the reforming king is cut off in the midst of his usefulness, in mercy to him, that he might not see the evil which was coming upon his kingdom; but in wrath to his people, for his death was an inlet to their desolations. The king of Egypt waged war, it seems, with the king of Assyria (so the king of Babylon is now called Josiah's) kingdom lay between them; he therefore thought himself concerned to oppose the king of Egypt, and check the growing threatening greatness of his power; for though at this time he protested he had no design against Josiah, yet if he should prevail to unite the river of Egypt, and the river Euphrates, the land of Judah would soon be overflowed between them; therefore Josiah went against him, and was killed in the first engagement, *ver. 29, 30.* Here, (1.) We cannot justify Josiah's conduct; he had no clear call to engage in this war, nor do we find that he asked counsel of God by Urim or prophets concerning it. What had he to do to appear and act as a friend and ally to the king of Assyria? Should he help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? If the kings of Egypt and Assyria quarrelled, he had reason to think God would bring good out of it to him and his people, and make them instrumental to weaken one another. Some do so understand the promise made to him, that he should come to his grave in peace, so as in the event it was not performed, because by his miscarriage in this matter he forfeited the benefit of it. God has promised to keep us in all our ways; but if we go out of our way, we throw ourselves out of his protection. Understand the promise so, as that I believe it was fulfilled, for he died in peace with God and his own conscience, and saw not, nor had any immediate prospect of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; yet I understand the providence to be a rebuke to him for his rashness. (2.) We must adore God's righteousness in taking away such a jewel from an unthankful people that knew not how to value it. They greatly lamented his death, *2 Chron. xxx. 25.* urged to it by Jeremiah, who told them the meaning of it, and what an ill omen it was; but they had not made a due improvement of the mercies they enjoyed by his life, which God taught them the worth of by the want of it.

31. ¶ Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 32. And he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done. 33. And Pharaoh-nechoh put him in bands at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and put the land to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold. 34. And Pharaoh-nechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king, in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there. 35. And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh; he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaoh-nechoh. 36. ¶ Jehoiakim was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. 37. And he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

Jerusalem saw not a good day after Josiah was laid in his grave, but one trouble came after another, till within twenty two years it was quite destroyed. Of the reign of two of his sons here is a short account; the former we find here a prisoner, and the latter a tributary to the king of Egypt, and both so in the beginning of their reign. This king of Egypt having slain Josiah, though he had not had any design upon Judah, yet being provoked by the opposition which Josiah gave him, now it should seem he bent all his force against his family and kingdom. If Josiah's sons had trod in his steps, they should have fared the better for his piety: but deviating from them, they fared the worse for his rashness.

(1.) Jehoahaz, a younger son, was first made king by the people of the land; probably because he was observed to be of a more active warlike genius than his elder brother, and likely to make head against the king of Egypt, and to avenge his father's death, which perhaps the people were more solicitous about in point of honour, than the keeping up and carrying on his father's reformation; and the issue was accordingly.

1. He did ill, ver. 32. Though he had a good education, and a good example given him, and many a good prayer we may suppose put up for him, yet he did *that which was evil in the sight of the Lord*, and it is to be feared began to do so in his father's life-time, for his reign was so short that he could not in that much shew himself. He did according to all that his wicked fathers had done. Though he had not time to do much, yet he had chosen his patterns, and shewed whom he intended to follow, and whose steps he resolved to tread in; and having done this, he is here reckoned to have done according to all the evil which they did whom he proposed to imitate. It is of great consequence to young people whom they choose to take example by, and whom they emulate: an error in this choice is fatal, Phil. iii. 17, 18.

2. Doing ill, no wonder that he fared ill. He was but three months a prince, and was then made a prisoner, and lived and died so. The king of Egypt seized him, and put him in bands, ver. 33. fearing lest he should give him disturbance, carried him to Egypt, and there he died soon after, ver. 34. This Jehoahaz is the young lion whom Ezekiel speaks of in his lamentation for the princes of Israel, that learned to catch the prey, and devour men, (that was the evil he did in the sight of the Lord) but the nations heard of him, he was taken in their pit, and they brought him with chains into the land of Egypt, Ezek. xix. 1—4. See Jer. xxii. 10, 11, 12.

(2.) Eliakim, another son of Josiah, was made king by the king of Egypt; it is not said in the room of Jehoahaz, his reign was so short that it was scarce worth taking notice of, but in the room of Josiah. The crown of Judah had hitherto always descended from a father to a son, and never till now from one brother to another; once the succession had so happened in the house of Ahab, but never till now in the house of David. The king of Egypt having used his power in making him king, farther shewed it in changing his name, he called him Jehoiakim, a name that has reference to Jehovah, for he had no design to make him renounce or forget the religion of his country; all people will walk in the name of their God, and let him do so. The king of Babylon did not do so by those whose names he changed, Dan. i. 7.

Of this Jehoiakim we are told, 1. That the king of Egypt made him poor, exacted from him a vast tribute of a hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold, ver. 23. which with much ado he squeezed out of his subjects, and gave it to Pharaoh, ver. 35. Formerly the Israelites had spoiled the Egyptians, now the Egyptians spoil Israel: see what woeful changes sin makes. 2. That which made him poor, yet did not make him good; notwithstanding the rebukes of providence he was under, by which he should have been convinced, humbled, and reformed, he did *that which was evil in the sight of the Lord*, ver. 37. and so prepared against himself greater judgments; for such God will send, if lesser do not do the work for which they are sent.

C H A P. XXIV.

Things are here ripening for, and hastening towards, the utter destruction of Jerusalem. We left Jehoiakim on the throne, placed there by the king of Egypt: now here we have, 1. The troubles of his reign, how he was brought into subjection by the king of Babylon, and severely chastised for attempting to shake off the yoke, ver. 1—6. and how Egypt also was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar, ver. 7. 2. The desolations of his son's reign, which continued but three months; and then he and all his great men being forced to surrender at discretion, were carried captives to Babylon, ver. 8—16. 3. The preparatives of the next reign, which was the last of all, for the utter ruin of Jerusalem, which the next chapter will give us an account of, ver. 17—20.

1. **I**N his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him. 2. And the

LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets. 3. Surely at the commandment of the LORD came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did. 4. And also for the innocent blood that he shed (for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood) which the LORD would not pardon. 5. ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 6. So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead. 7. And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river of Euphrates, all that pertained to the king of Egypt.

We have here the first mention of a name which makes a great figure both in the histories, and in the prophecies of the Old Testament: it is that of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, ver. 1. That head of gold. A potent prince, and one that was the terror of the mighty in the land of the living, and yet his name had not been known in sacred writ, if it had not been employed in the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews.

1. He made Jehoiakim his tributary, and kept him in subjection three years, ver. 1. Nebuchadnezzar began his reign in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, in his eighth year he made him his prisoner, but restored him upon his promise of faithfulness to him; that promise he kept about three years, but then rebelled, probably, in hopes of assistance from the king of Egypt. If Jehoiakim had served his God as he should have done, he had not been servant to the king of Babylon; but God would thus make him know the difference between his service and the service of the kings of the countries, 2 Chron. xii. 8. If he had been content with his servitude, and true to his word, his condition had been no worse; but rebelling against the king of Babylon, he plunged himself into more trouble.

2. When he rebelled he sent his forces against him to destroy his country, bands of Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, Ammonites, who were all now in the service and pay of the king of Babylon, ver. 2. and with all retained and now shewed their ancient enmity to the Israel of God. Yet no mention is here made of their commission from the king of Babylon, but only of that from the King of kings. The Lord sent against him, all these bands. And again, ver. 3. Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, else the commandment of Nebuchadnezzar could not have brought it. Many are serving God's purposes that are not aware of it.

Two things God intended in suffering Judah to be thus harried. 1. The punishment of the sins of Manasseh, which God now visited upon the third and fourth generation. So long he waited before he visited them, to see if the nation would repent; but they continued impenitent, notwithstanding Josiah's endeavours to reform them, and ready to relapse upon the first turn into their former idolatries; now the old bond was put in suit, they were called up upon the former judgment, that was revived which God had laid up in store, and sealed among his treasures, Deut. xxxii. 34. Job xiv. 17. and in remembrance of it at he removed Judah out of his sight, and yet the world know, that time will not wear out the guilt of sin, and that reproves are not pardons. All that Manasseh did was called to mind, but especially the innocent blood that he shed, much of it we may suppose was the blood of God's witnesses and worshippers, which the Lord would not pardon. Is there then any unpardonable sin but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost? This is meant of the remitting of the temporal punishment: though Manasseh repented, and we have reason to think even the persecutions and murders he was guilty of were pardoned, so that he was delivered from the wrath to come, yet as they were national sins, they lay still charged upon the land, crying for national judgments. Perhaps, some were now living that were aiding and abetting: and the present king was guilty of innocent blood, as appears, Jer. xxii. 17. See what a provoking sin murder is, how loud it cries, and how long. See what need nations have to lament the sins of their fathers, lest they smart for them. 2. God intended hereby the accomplishment of the prophecies; it was according to the word of the Lord which he spake by his servants the prophets. Rather shall Judah be removed out of his sight, nay rather shall heaven and earth pass away, than any word of God fall to the ground. Threatenings will be fulfilled as sure as promises, if the sinner's repentance prevent not.

3. The king of Egypt was likewise subdued by the king of Babylon, and a great part of his country taken from him, ver. 7. It was but lately that he had oppressed Israel, chap. xxiii. 33. now he is himself brought down, and disabled to attempt any thing for the recovery of his losses, or the assistance of his allies; he dares not come any more out of his land. Afterwards he attempted to give Zedekiah some relief, but was obliged to retire, Jer. xxxvii. 7.

4. Jehoiakim seeing his country laid waste, and himself ready to fall into the enemies hand, as it should seem, broke his heart and died for grief in the midst of his days, ver. 6. So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers, but it is not said he was buried with them, for, no doubt, the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled, that he should not be lamented, as his father was, but buried with the burial of an ass, Jer. xxii. 18, 19. and his dead body cast out, Jer. xxxvi. 30.

8. ¶ Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months: and his mother's name was Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. 9. And he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done. 10. ¶ At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. 11. And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it. 12. And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign. 13. And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the

the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said. 14. And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen, and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land. 15. And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity, from Jerusalem to Babylon. 16. And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen, and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon. 17. ¶ And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah. 18. Zedekiah was twenty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 19. And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. 20. For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

This should have been the history of king Jehoiachin's reign, but alas, it is only the history of king Jehoiachin's captivity, as it is called, *Ezek. i. 2*. He came to the crown not to have the honour of wearing it, but the shame of losing it; *Ideo tantum venerat ut exiret*.

1. His reign was short and inconsiderable; he reigned but three months, and then was removed and carried captive to Babylon, as his father, it is likely, would have been, if he had lived but so much longer. What an unhappy young prince was this, that was thrust into a falling house, a sinking throne! What an unnatural father had he, who begat him to suffer for him; and by his own sin and folly had left himself nothing to bequeath to his son but his own miseries! Yet this young prince reigned long enough to shew that he justly smarted for his father's sins, for he trod in their steps, *ver. 9*. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as they had done; he did nothing to cut off the entail of the curse, to discharge the incumbrances of his crown, and therefore *transit cum onere*, with his own iniquity that of his fathers shall come into the account.

2. The calamities that came upon him, and his family and people, in the very beginning of his reign, were very grievous.

(1.) Jerusalem was besieged by the king of Babylon, *ver. 10, 11*. He had sent his forces to ravage the country, *ver. 2*. now he came himself and laid siege to the city. Now the word of God was fulfilled, *Deut. xxviii. 49, &c.* The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, of fierce countenance, that shall cut the fruit of thy land, and then besiege thee in all thy gates.

(2.) Jehoiachin immediately surrendered at discretion. As soon as he heard the king of Babylon was come in person against the city, his name being by this time become very formidable, he beat a parley, and went out to him, *ver. 12*. He had made his peace with God, and taken the method that Hezekiah did in the like case, he needed not to have feared the king of Babylon, but might have held out with courage, honour, and success; one should have chased a thousand; but wanting the faith and piety of an Israelite, he had not the resolution of a man, of a soldier, of a prince. He and his royal family, his mother, and wives, his servants, and princes, delivered themselves up prisoners of war; and this came of their being servants of sin.

(3.) Nebuchadnezzar rifled the treasures both of the church and of the state, and carried away the silver and gold of both, *ver. 13*. Now the word of God by Isaiah was fulfilled, *chap. xx. 17*. All that is in thine house shall be carried to Babylon. Even the vessels of the temple which Solomon had made, and laid up in store to be used as the old ones were worn out, he cut off from the temple, and began to cut them in pieces, but upon second thoughts reserved them for his own use, for we find Belshazzar drinking wine in them, *Dan. v. 2, 3*.

(4.) He carried away a great part of Jerusalem into captivity to weaken it, that he might effectually secure to himself the dominion of it, and prevent its revolt; and to enrich himself with the wealth or service of those he took away; there had been some carried away eight years before this, in the first year of Nebuchadnezzar and the third of Jehoiakim, among them were Daniel and his fellows. See *Dan. i. 1, 2*. They had approved themselves so well that this politic prince coveted more of them. Now he carried off,

1. The young king himself, and his family, *ver. 15*. and we find, *chap. xxv. 28, 29* that for thirty-seven years he continued a close prisoner. 2. All the great men, the princes and officers, whose riches were kept for the owners thereof to their hurt, *Eccles. v. 13*. tempting the enemies to make a prey of them first. 3. All the military men, the mighty men of valour, *ver. 14*. The mighty of the land, *ver. 15*. The men of might, even all that were strong, and apt for war, *ver. 16*. These could not defend themselves, and the conqueror would not leave them to defend their country, but took them away to be employed in his service. 4. All the craftsmen and smiths who made weapons of war; in taking them, he did in effect disarm the city according to the Philistines policy, *1 Sam. xiii. 19*. In this captivity Ezekiel the prophet was carried away, *Ezek. i. 1, 2*. and Mordecai, *Esth. ii. 6*. This Jehoiachin was also called Jeconiah, *1 Chron. iii. 16*. and in contempt Coniah, *Jer. xxii. 24*. where his captivity is foretold.

3. The successor whom the king of Babylon appointed in the room of Jehoiachin. God had written him childless, *Jer. xxii. 30*. and therefore his uncle was intrusted with the government. The king of Babylon made Mattaniah king, the son of Josiah, and to mind him, and let all the world know that he was his creature, he changed his name, and called him Zedekiah, *ver. 17*. God had sometimes charged it upon his people, *They have set up kings but not by me*, *Hos. viii. 4*. and now to punish them for that, the king of Babylon shall have the setting up of their kings. Those are justly deprived of their liberty, that use it and insist upon it against God's authority. This Zedekiah was the last of the kings of Judah: the name which the king of Babylon gave him, signifies, *The justice of the Lord*, which was a presage of the glorifying of God's justice in his ruin.

1. See how impious this Zedekiah was. Though the judgments of God

upon his three immediate predecessors might have been a warning to him not to tread in their steps, yet he did that which was evil, like all the rest, *ver. 14*.

2. See how impolitic he was. As his predecessor lost his courage, so he his conduct, with his religion, for he rebelled against the king of Babylon, *ver. 20*. whose tributary he was, and so provoked him whom he was utterly unable to contend with, and who, if he had continued true to him, would have protected him; which was the most foolish thing he could do, and hastened the ruin of his kingdom. This came to pass through the anger of the Lord, that he might cast him out from his presence. Note, When those that are intrusted with the counsels of a nation act unwisely and against their true interest, we ought to take notice of the displeasure of God in it. It is for the sins of a people that God removes the speech of the trusty, and takes away the understanding of the aged, and hides from their eyes the things that belong to the public peace. Whom God will destroy, he insinuates,

C H A P. XXV.

Ever since David's time Jerusalem had been a famous place; beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth; while the book of Psalms lasts that name will sound great. In the New Testament we read much of it, when it was, as here, ripening again for its ruin. In the close of the Bible we read of a new Jerusalem; every thing therefore that concerns Jerusalem is worthy our regard. In this chapter we have, (1.) The utter destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans; the city besieged and taken, *ver. 1—4*. the houses burnt, *ver. 8, 9*. the wall broken down, *ver. 10*. and the inhabitants carried away into captivity, *ver. 11, 12*. The glory of Jerusalem was, 1. That it was the royal city, there were set the thrones of the house of David; but that glory is here departed, for the prince is made a most miserable prisoner, and the seed royal destroyed, *ver. 5—7*. and the principal officers put to death, *ver. 18—21*. 2. That it was the holy city, there was the testimony of Israel; but that glory is departed, for Solomon's temple is burnt to the ground, *ver. 9*. and the sacred vessels that remained are carried away to Babylon, *ver. 13—17*. Thus is Jerusalem become as a widow, *Lam. i. 1*. *Isaiah*. Where is the glory? (2.) The destruction and dispersion of the remnant that was left in Judah under Gedaliah, *ver. 22—26*. (3.) The countenance which after thirty-seven years imprisonment was given to Jehoiachin the captivated king of Judah, *ver. 27—30*.

1. **A**ND it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and they built forts against it round about. 2. And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah. 3. And on the ninth day of the fourth month, the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land. 4. ¶ And the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled by night, by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden, (now the Chaldees were against the city round about) and the king went the way toward the plain. 5. And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him. 6. So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon, to Riblah, and they gave judgment upon him. 7. And they slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

We left king Zedekiah in rebellion against the king of Babylon, *chap. xxiv. 20*. contriving and endeavouring to shake off his yoke, when he was no way able to do it, nor took the right method by making God his friend first. Now here we have an account of the fatal consequences of that attempt.

1. The king of Babylon's army laid siege to Jerusalem, *ver. 1*. what should hinder them when the country was already in their possession? *chap. xxiv. 2*. They built forts against the city round about, from whence, by such arts of war as they then had, they battered it; sent into it instruments of death, and kept out of it the necessary supports of life. Formerly Jerusalem had been compassed with the favour of God as with a shield, but now their defence was departed from them, and their enemies surrounded them on every side. Those that by sin have provoked God to leave them, will find that innumerable evils will compass them about. Two years this siege lasted, at first the army retired for fear of the king of Egypt, *Jer. xxxvii. 11*. but finding him not so powerful as they thought, they soon returned, with a resolution not to quit the city till they had made themselves masters of it.

2. During this siege the famine prevailed, *ver. 3*. so that for a long time they eat their bread by weight and with care, *Ezek. iv. 16*. Thus they were punished for their gluttony and excess, their fullness of bread and feeding themselves without fear; at length there was no bread for the people of the land, i. e. the common people, the soldiers, whereby they were weakened, and rendered unfit for service, now they eat their own children for want of food; see this foretold by one prophet, *Ezek. v. 10*. and bewailed by another, *Lam. iv. 3, &c.* Jeremiah earnestly persuaded the king to surrender, *Jer. xxxviii. 17* but his heart was hardened to his destruction.

3. At length the city was taken by storm, it was broken up, *ver. 4*. the besiegers made a breach in the wall, at which they forced their way into it; the besieged, unable any longer to defend it, endeavoured to quit it, and make the best of their way; many no doubt were put to the sword, the victorious army being much exasperated by their obstinacy.

4. The king and his family and all his great men made their escape in the night, by some secret passages which the besiegers either had not discovered or did not keep their eye upon, *ver. 4*. But those as much deceive themselves who think to out-run God's judgments as those who think to out-face them, the feet of him that flees from them will as surely fail as the hands of him that fights against them; when God judgeth he will overcome. Intelli-

Intelligence was given to the Chaldeans of the king's flight, and which way he was gone, so that they soon overtook him, *ver. 5.* his guards were scattered from him, every man shifting for his own safety; had he put himself under God's protection, that would not have failed him now; he presently fell into the enemies hands, and here we are told what they did with him.

(1.) He was brought to the king of Babylon, and tried by a council of war, for rebelling against him who set him up; and to whom he had sworn fidelity; God and man had a quarrel with him for this, see *Ezek. xvii. 16, &c.* The king of Babylon now lay at Riblah, which lay between Judea and Babylon, that he might be ready to give orders, both to the court at home and his army abroad.

(2.) His sons were slain before his eyes, though children, that this doleful spectacle, the last his eyes were to behold, might leave remaining impression of grief and horror upon his spirit as long as he lived; in slaying his sons they shewed their indignation at his falshood, and in effect declared, that neither he nor any of his breed were fit to be trusted, and therefore not fit to live.

(3.) His eyes were put out, by which he was deprived of that common comfort of human life which is given even to them that are in misery, and to the bitter in soul, the light of the sun; by which he was also disabled for any service: he dreaded being mocked, and therefore would not be persuaded to yield, *Jer. xxxviii. 19.* but that which he feared came upon him with a witness, and no doubt added much to his misery; for as they that are deaf are jealous every body talks of them, so they that are blind are jealous every body laughs at them; by this, two prophecies that seemed to contradict one another were both fulfilled. Jeremiah prophesied that Zedekiah should be brought to Babylon, *Jer. xxxii. 5.—xxxiv. 3.* Ezekiel prophesied that he should not see Babylon, *Ezek. xii. 13.* he was brought thither, but his eyes being put out he did not see it; thus he ended his days before he ended his life.

(4.) He was bound in fetters of brass, and so carried to Babylon; he that was blind needed not to be bound, his blindness fettered him, but for his greater disgrace they led him bound only, whereas common malefactors are laid in iron, *Psal. cv. 18.—cvii. 10.* he being a prince was bound with fetters of brass; but that the metal was somewhat nobler and lighter was little comfort, while still he was in fetters; let it not seem strange if those that have been held in the cords of iniquity come to be thus held in the cords of affliction, *Job xxxvi. 8.*

8. ¶ And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month (which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon) came Nebuzar-aden captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: 9. And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire. 10. And all the army of the Chaldees that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about. 11. Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzar-aden, the captain of the guard carry away. 12. But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land, to be vine-dressers and husbandmen. 13. And the pillars of brass that were in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brasen sea that was in the house of the LORD, did the Chaldees break in pieces, and carried the bras of them to Babylon. 14. And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away. 15. And the fire-pans, and the bowls, and such things as were of gold, in gold, and of silver, in silver, the captain of the guard took away. 16. The two pillars, one sea, and the bases which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD, the bras of all these vessels was without weight. 17. The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and the chapter upon it was bras: and the height of the chapter three cubits: and the wreathen-work, and pomegranates upon the chapter round about, all of bras: and like unto these had the second pillar with wreathen-work. 18. ¶ And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door. 19. And out of the city he took an officer, that was set over the men of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, which mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people of the land that were found in the city. 20. And Nebuzar-aden captain of the guard took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon, to Riblah. 21. And the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land.

Though we have reason to think the army of the Chaldeans much enraged against the city for holding out with so much stubbornness, yet they did not therefore put all to fire and sword as soon as they had taken the city, which is too commonly done in that case, but about a month after, (compare *ver. 8.* with *ver. 3.*) Nebuzar-aden was sent with orders to complete the destruction of Jerusalem; this space God gave them to repent after all the foregoing days of his patience, but in vain, their hearts (for aught appears) were still hardened, and therefore execution is awarded to the utmost.

1. The city and temple are burnt, *ver. 9.* It doth not appear that the king of Babylon designed to send any colonies to people Jerusalem, and therefore he ordered it to be laid in ashes, as a nest of rebels; at the burning of the king's house and the houses of the great men one cannot so much wonder, the inhabitants had by their sins made them combustible, but that the house of the Lord should perish in these flames, and that holy and beautiful house should be burnt with fire, *Isa. lxiv. 11.* is very strange, that house which David prepared for, and which Solomon built at such a vast expence; that house which had the eye and heart of God perpetually upon it, *1 Kings ix. 3.* might not that have been snatched as a brand out of this burning? No, that will not be fire-proof against God's judgments; this stately structure must into ashes, and it is probable the ark in it, for the enemies having heard how dear the Philistines paid for the abusing of it, durst not seize that, nor did any of his friends take care to preserve it, for then we should have heard of it again in the second temple; one of the apocryphal writers doth indeed tell us that the prophet Jeremiah got it out of the temple and conveyed it to a cave in mount Nebo on the other side Jordan, and hid it there, *2 Macc. ii. 4, 5.* but that could not be, for Jeremiah was a close prisoner at that time. By the burning of the temple God would shew how little he cares for the external pomp of his worship when the life and power of religion is neglected; the people trusted to the temple, as if that would protect them in their sins, *Jer. vii. 4.* but God by this lets them know, that when they had profaned it, they would find it but a refuge of lies. About four hundred and twenty years (some say four hundred and thirty years) this temple had stood, the people having forfeited the promises made concerning it, those promises must be understood of the gospel-temple, which is God's rest for ever. It is observable, that the second temple was burnt by the Romans the same month and the same day of the month that the first temple was burnt by the Chaldeans, which Josephus saith was the tenth of August.

2. The walls of Jerusalem are demolished, *ver. 10.* as if the victorious army would be revenged on them that had kept them out so long, or at least prevent the like opposition another time; sin unwalls a people, and takes away their defence; these walls were never repaired till Nehemiah did it.

3. The residue of the people are carried away captive to Babylon, *ver. 11.* Most of the inhabitants had perished by sword or famine, or had made their escape when the king did, (for it is said, *ver. 5.* his army was scattered from him) so that there were very few left, who, with the deserters, making in all but eight hundred thirty-two persons, (as appears, *Jer. lii. 29.*) were carried away into captivity; only the poor of the land were left behind, *ver. 12.* to till the ground, and dress the vineyards for the Chaldeans. Sometimes poverty is a protection, and one has reason to say, Fare fall nothing; for they that have nothing, have nothing to lose: When the rich Jews, who had been oppressive to the poor, were made strangers, nay, prisoners in an enemy's country, the poor, whom they had despised and oppressed, had liberty and peace in their own country; thus providence sometimes remarkably humbles the proud, and favours them of low degree.

4. The brasen vessels and other appurtenances of the temple are carried away, those of silver and gold being most of them gone before; those two famous columns of brass, Jachin and Boaz, which signified the strength and stability of the house of God, were broken to pieces, and the bras of them carried to Babylon, *ver. 13.* When the things signified were sinned away, what should the signs stand there for? Ahaz had profanely cut off the borders of the bases, and put the brasen sea upon a pavement of stones, *2 Kings xvi. 17.* justly therefore are the bases themselves and the brasen sea delivered into the enemies hand; it is just with God to take away his ordinances from those that profane and abuse them, that curtail and depress them; some things remained of gold and silver, *ver. 15.* which were now carried off; but most of this plunder was brass, such a vast quantity of it, that it is said to be without weight, *ver. 16.* The carrying away of the vessels wherewith they ministered, *ver. 14.* put an end to the ministration; it was a righteous thing with God to deprive those of the benefit of his worship that had slighted it so long, and preferred false worship before it; they that would have many altars, now shall have none.

5. Several of the great men are slain in cold blood; Seraiah the chief priest, who was the father of Ezra (as appears, *Ezra vii. 1.*) the second priest, that when there was occasion officiated for him, and three door-keepers of the temple, *ver. 18.* the general of the army, five privy-counsellors, (afterwards they made them up seven, *Jer. lii. 26.*) the secretary of war, or pay-master of the army, and threescore country gentlemen that had concealed themselves in the city; these being persons of some rank, were brought to the king of Babylon, *ver. 19, 20.* who ordered them to be all put to death, *ver. 21.* when in reason they might have hoped that surely the bitterness of death was past; these the king of Babylon's regency looked upon as most active in opposing him: but divine justice, we may suppose, looked upon them as ringleaders in that idolatry and impiety which were punished by these desolations. This completed the calamity, so Judah was carried away out of their land, about eight hundred and sixty years after they were put in possession of it by Joshua: now the scripture was fulfilled, *The Lord shall bring thee and the king which thou shalt set over thee into a nation which thou hast not known,* *Deut. xxviii. 36.* Sin kept their fathers forty years out of Canaan, and now turned them out: the Lord is known by those judgments which he executeth, and makes good that word which he hath spoken, *Amos iii. 2.* You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

22. ¶ And as for the people that remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan ruler. 23. And when all the captains of the armies, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor, there came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Cariah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of a Maachathite, they, and their men. 24. And Gedaliah sware to them, and to their men, and said unto them, Fear not to be the servants of the Chaldees: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. 25. But it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishamah, of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died; and the Jews and the Chaldees that were with him at Mizpah. 26. And all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the armies arose, and came to Egypt: for they were afraid of the Chaldees. 27. ¶ And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth

year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison. 28. And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon. 29. And changed his prison-garments: and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life. 30. And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day all the days of his life.

In these verses we have,

1. The dispersion of the remaining people, the city of Jerusalem was quite laid waste; some people there were in the land of Judah, ver. 22. that had rid out the storm, and (which was no small favour at this time, Jer. xlv. 5.) had their lives given them for a prey. Now see,

(1.) What a good posture they were put into; the king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah, one of themselves, to be their governor and protector under him, a very good man, and one that would make the best of bad, ver. 22. his father Ahikam was one that countenanced and protected Jeremiah when the princes had vowed his death, Jer. xxvi. 24. It was probable this Gedaliah, by the advice of Jeremiah, had gone over to the Chaldeans, and had approved himself so well, that the king of Babylon intrusted him with the government; he resided not at Jerusalem, but at Mizpah, in the land of Benjamin, a place famous in Samuel's time, thither those came that fled from Zedekiah, ver. 5. and put themselves under his protection, ver. 23. which he assured them of, if they would be patient and peaceable under the government of the king of Babylon, ver. 24. Gedaliah, though he had not the pomp and power of a sovereign prince, yet might have been a greater blessing to them than many of their kings had been, especially having such a privy-council as Jeremiah, who was now with them, and interested himself in their affairs, Jer. xl. 5, 6.

(2.) What a fatal breach was made upon them presently by the death of Gedaliah, within two months after he entered upon his government. The utter extirpation of the Jews for the present was determined, and therefore it is in vain for them to think of taking root again, the whole land must be plucked up, Jer. xlv. 4. yet this hopeful settlement is dashed to pieces, not by the Chaldeans, but by some of themselves: the things of their peace were so hid from their eyes, that they knew not when they were well, nor would believe when they were told.

1. They had a good governor of their own, and him they slew for spite to the Chaldeans, because he was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, ver. 25. Ishmael, who was of the royal family, envying Gedaliah's advancement, and the happy settlement of the people under him, though he could not propose to set up himself, resolved to ruin him, and basely slew him and all his friends, both Jews and Chaldees; Nebuchadnezzar would not, could not have been a more mischievous enemy to their peace, than this degenerate branch of the house of David was.

2. They were as yet in their own good land, but they out-ran it, and went to Egypt for fear of the Chaldees, ver. 26. The Chaldeans had reason enough to be offended at the murder of Gedaliah; but if those that remained had humbly remonstrated to them that it was only the act of Ishmael and his party, we may suppose they who were innocent of it, nay, who suffered greatly by it, should not have been punished for it: but under pre-

tence of this apprehension, contrary to the counsel of Jeremiah, they all went to Egypt, where, it is probable, they mixed with the Egyptians by degrees, and were never heard of more as Israelites; thus was there a full end made of them by their own folly and disobedience, and Egypt had the last of them, that the last verse of that chapter of threatening might be fulfilled after all the rest, Deut. xxviii. 68. *The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again.* These events are more largely related by the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xl. to chap. xlv. *Quæque ipsi miserrima vidit, & quorum pars magna fuit.*

2. The reviving of the captivated prince; of Zedekiah we hear no more after he was carried blind to Babylon; it is likely, he did not live long, but when he died he was buried with some marks of honour, Jer. xxxiv. 5. Of Jehoiachin, or Jeconiah, who surrendered himself, chap. xxiv. 12. we are here told, that as soon as Evil-merodach came to the crown, upon the death of his father Nebuchadnezzar, he released him out of prison, where he had lain thirty-seven years, and was now fifty-five years old, *spake kindly to him*, paid more respect to him than to any other of the kings his father had left in captivity, ver. 18. gave him princely cloathing instead of his prison garments, maintained him in his own palace, ver. 29, and allowed him a pension for himself and his family some way agreeable to his rank, *a daily rate for every day as long as he lived.* Consider this,

1. As a very happy change of Jehoiachin's condition; to have honour and liberty after he had been so long in confinement and disgrace, the plenty and pleasure of a court, after he had been so long accustomed to the straits and miseries of a prison, was like the return of the morning after a very dark and tedious night: Let none say they shall never see good again, because they have long seen little but evil; the most miserable know not what blessed turn providence may yet give to their affairs, nor what comforts they are preserved for, *according to the days wherein they have been afflicted*, Psal. xc. 15. However, the death of afflicted saints is to them such a change as this here was to Jehoiachin, it will release them out of their prison, shake off the body, that prison-garment, and open the way to their advancement; will send them to the throne, to the table of the King of kings, the glorious liberty of God's children.

2. As a very generous act of Evil-merodach's; he thought his father made the yoke of his captives too heavy, and therefore with the tenderness of a man and the honour of a prince made it lighter; it should seem all the kings he had in his power were favoured, but Jehoiachin above them all; some think for the sake of the antiquity of his family, and the honour of his renowned ancestors, David and Solomon; none of the kings of the nations, it is likely, were descended from so long a race of kings in a direct lineal succession, and by a male line, as the king of Judah. The Jews say this Evil-merodach had been himself imprisoned by his own father, when he returned from his madness, for some mismanagement at that time, and that in prison he contracted a friendship with Jehoiachin, therefore as soon as he had it in his power shewed him this kindness as a sufferer, as a fellow sufferer; some suggest that Evil-merodach had learned from Daniel and his fellows the principles of the true religion, and was well affected to them, and upon that account favoured Jehoiachin.

3. As a good providence of God, for the encouragement of the Jews in captivity, and the support of their faith and hope concerning their enlargement in due time; this happened just about the midnight of their captivity, thirty-six of the seventy years were now past, and almost as many were yet behind, and now to see their king thus advanced would be a comfortable earnest to them of their own release in due time, in the set time: *unto the upright there thus ariseth light in the darkness*, to encourage them to hope even in the cloudy and dark day, that at evening time it shall be light; when therefore we are perplexed, let us not be in despair.

THE END OF THE SECOND BOOK OF KINGS.

AN

E X P O S I T I O N,

WITH

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS,

Upon the FIRST BOOK of

C H R O N I C L E S.

In common things repetition is thought needless and nanous; but in sacred things *precept must be upon precept, and line upon line; Tome, saith the Apostle, to write the same things is not grievous, but for you it is safe*, Phil. iii. 1. These books of Chronicles are much of them repetition; so are much of the second and third of the four Evangelists; and yet no tautologies either here or there, no vain repetitions. We may be ready to think, of all the books of holy scripture we could best spare these two books of Chronicles; perhaps we might, and yet we could very ill spare them, for there are many most excellent useful things in them, which we find not elsewhere: And for what we find here which we have already met with, (1.) It might be of great use to those who lived when these books were first published, before the canon of the Old Testament was completed, and the particles of it put together, for it would mind them of what was more fully related in the other books. Abstracts, abridgments, and references, are of use in divinity as well as law. That, perhaps, may not be said in vain, which yet has been said before. (2.) It is still of use, that out of the mouth of two witnesses every word may be established, and being inculcated may be remembered. The penman of these books is supposed to be Ezra, that ready scribe in the law of the LORD, Ezra vii. 6. It is a groundless story of that apocryphal writer, 2 Esdr. xiv. 21, &c. that all the law being burnt, Ezra was divinely inspired to write it all over again; which yet might take rise from the book of Chronicles, where we find, though not all the same story repeated, yet the names of all those who were the subjects of that story. These books are called in the Hebrew *Words of days*; journals, or

or annals; because by divine direction collected out of some public and authentic records. The collection was made after the captivity, and yet the language of the originals written before is sometimes retained; as *2 Chron. v. 9*. There it is *unto this day*, which must have been written before the destruction of the temple. The Septuagint calls it a book *Παραλειπομένων* of *things left*, or overlooked by the preceding historians, and several such things there are in it. It is the reward, the gathered host of this sacred camp, which gathers up what remained, that nothing might be lost. In this first book we have, (1.) A collection of sacred genealogies, from Adam to David; and they are none of those whom the Apostle calls endless genealogies, but have their use and end in Christ, *chap. i.—ix*. Divers little passages of history are here inserted, which we had not before. (2.) A repetition of this history of the translation of the kingdom from Saul to David, and of the triumph of David's reign, with large additions, *chap. x.—xxi*. (3.) An original account of the settlement David made of the ecclesiastical affairs, and the preparation he made for the building of the temple, *chap. xxii.—xxix*. These are *words of days*, of the oldest days, of the best day of the Old Testament church. The reigns of kings and dates of kingdoms, as well as the lives of common persons, are reckoned by days; for a little often gives a great turn, and yet all times is nothing to eternity.

C H A P. I.

This chapter and many that follow it repeat the genealogies we have hitherto met with in the sacred history, and put them all together with considerable additions. We may be tempted, it may be, to think it had been well if they had not been writ, because when they come to be compared with other parallel places, there are differences found which we can scarce accommodate to our satisfaction; yet we must not therefore stumble at the word, but bless God that the things necessary to salvation are plain enough. And since the wise God has thought fit to write these things to us, we shall not pass them over unread. All scripture is profitable, though not all alike profitable; and we may take occasion for good thoughts and meditations even from those parts of scripture that do not offer us any plenty of observations. These genealogies, (1.) Were then of great use, when they were here preserved, and put into the Jewish hands after their return from Babylon; for the captivity, like the deluge, had put all into confusion, and they in that dispersion and despair would be in danger of losing the distinctions of their tribes and families: this therefore revives the ancient landmarks; even of some of the tribes that were carried captive into Assyria. Perhaps it might invite the Jews to study the sacred writings which had been neglected, to find the names of their ancestors, and the rise of their families in them. (2.) They are still of some use for the illustrating of the scripture story, and especially for the clearing of the pedigree of the Messiah, that it might appear that our blessed Saviour was according to the prophecies that went before him, the son of David, the son of Judah, the son of Abraham, the son of Adam. And now he is come for whose sake these registers were preserved; the Jews since have so lost all their genealogies, that even that of their priest, the most sacred of all, is forgotten, and they know not of any one man in the world that can prove himself of the house of Aaron. When the building is reared, the scaffold is removed; when the promised seed is come, the line that was to lead to him is broken off. In this chapter we have an abstract of the genealogies in the book of Genesis till we come to Jacob. (1.) The descents from Adam to Noah and his sons, out of Gen. v. ver. 1—4. (2.) The posterity of Noah's sons, by which the earth was re-peopled, out of Gen. x. ver. 5—23. (3.) The descents from Shem to Abraham, out of Gen. xi. ver. 24—28. (4.) The posterity of Ishmael, and of Abraham's sons by Keturah, out of Gen. xxv. ver. 29—33. (5.) The posterity of Esau, out of Gen. xxxvi. ver. 35—54. These, it is likely, were passed over lightly in Genesis, and therefore, according to the law of the schools, we are made to go over our lesson again which we did not learn well.

1. **A**DAM, Sheth, Enosh, 2. Kenan, Mahalaleel, Jered, 3. Henoah, Methuselah, Lamech, 4. Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. 5. ¶ The sons of Japheth: Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras. 6. And the sons of Gomer: Ashchenaz, and Rishath, and Togarmah. 7. And the sons of Javan; Eliphaz, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim. 8. ¶ The sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, Put, and Canaan. 9. And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabta, and Raamah, and Sabtecha: and the sons of Raamah; Sheba, and Dedan. 10. And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be mighty upon the earth. 11. And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtuhim. 12. And Pathrusim, and Casluhim (of whom came the Philistines) and Caphthorim. 13. And Canaan begat Zidon his first-born, and Heth, 14. The Jebusite also, and the Amorite, and the Girgashite, 15. And the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite. 16. And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite. 17. ¶ The sons of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram, and Uz, and Hul, and Gether, and Meshech. 18. And Arphaxad begat Shelah, and Shelah begat Eber. 19. And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg, because in his days the earth was divided; and his brother's name was Joktan. 20. And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph, and Hazarmaveth, and Jerah, 21. Hadoram also, and Uzal, and Diklah, 22. And Ebal, and Abimeael, and Sheba, 23. And Ophir, and Havilah, and Jobab. All these were the sons of Joktan. 24. ¶ Shem, Arphaxad, Shelah, 25. Eber, Pelug, Reu, 26. Serug, Nahor, Terah, 27. Abram, the same is Abraham.

This paragraph has Adam for its first word, and Abraham for its last. Between the creation of the former, and the birth of the latter, was about two thousand years; almost the one half of which time Adam himself lived.

Adam, the common father of our flesh; Abraham, the common father of the faithful. By the breach which the former made of the covenant of innocency, we were all made miserable: by the covenant of grace made with the latter, we are all, or may be made happy. We are all by nature the seed of Adam, branches of that wild olive. Let us see to it, that by faith we become the seed of Abraham, *Rom. iv. 11, 12*. that we be planted into the good olive: and partake of its root and fatness.

(1.) The four first verses of this paragraph, and the four last, which are linked together by Shem, *ver. 4—24*. contain therein the sacred line of Christ from Adam to Abraham, and are inserted in his pedigree; the order ascending as here descending; *Luke iii. 34—38*. that their reproach may appear malicious, who said of him. *As for this man, we know not whence he is*. Bishop Patrick well observes here, that a genealogy being to be drawn of the families of the Jews, this appears as the peculiar glory of the Jewish nation, that they alone were able to derive their pedigree from the first man that God created, which no other nation pretended to; but abused themselves and their posterity with fabulous accounts of their originals. The Arcadians fancying that they were before the moon: the people of Thessaly that they sprung from stones; the Athenians that they grew out of the earth: much like the vain imaginations which some of the philosophers had of the origin of the universe: The account which the holy scriptures gives both of the creation of the world, and of the rise of nations, carries with it as clear evidences of its own truth, as those idle traditions do of their own vanity and falsehood.

(2.) All the verses between repeat the account of the replenishing of the earth by the sons of Noah after the flood. 1. He begins with those that were strangers to the church, the sons of Japheth, who were planted in the isles of the Gentiles, those western parts of the world, the countries of Europe; of these he gives a short account, *ver. 5—7*. because with these the Jews had hitherto had little or no dealings. 2. He proceeds to those that had been many of them enemies to the church, the sons of Ham, who moved southward toward Africa, and those parts of Asia which lay that way. Nimrod of Cush began to be an oppressor, probably, to the people of God in his time; but Mizraim, from whom came the Egyptians, and Canaan, from whom came the Canaanites, are both of them names of great note in the Jewish story; for with their descendants the Israel of God had mighty struggles, to get out of the land of Egypt, and into the land of Canaan, and therefore the branches of Mizraim, are particularly recorded, *ver. 11, 12*. and of Canaan, *ver. 13—16*. See at what rate God valued Israel, when he gave Egypt for their ransom, *Isa. xliii. 3*. and cast out all these nations before them, *Psal. lxxx. 3*. 3. He then gives an account of those that were the ancestors and allies of the church, the posterity of Shem, *ver. 17—23*. these peopled Asia, and spread themselves eastward; the Assyrians, Syrians, Chaldeans, Persians, and Arabians, descended from these. At first the originals of the respective nations were known; but at this day we have reason to think the nations are all so mingled with one another, by the enlargement of commerce and dominion, the transplanting of colonies, the carrying away of captives, and many such occasions, that no one nation, nor the greatest part of any, is descended entire from any one of these fountains. Only this we are sure of, that God has created of one blood all the nations of men, they are all descended from one Adam, one Noah. Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? *Mal. ii. 10*. Our register hastens to the line of Abraham; breaking off abruptly from all the other families of the sons of Noah, but that of Arphaxad, from whom Christ was to come: The great promise of the Messiah (saith Bishop Patrick) was translated from Adam to Seth, from him to Shem, from him to Eber, and so the Hebrew nation, who were intrusted above all nations with that sacred treasure, till the promise was performed, and the Messiah was come, and then that nation was made not a people.

28. The sons of Abraham; Isaac, and Ishmael. 29. These are their generations: The first-born of Ishmael, Nebaioth: then Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam, 30. Mishma, and Dumah, Massa, Hadad, and Tema, 31. Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael. 32. ¶ Now the sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: the bare Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. And the sons of Jokshan; Sheba, and Dedan. 33. And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Ephraim, and Henoch, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these are the sons of Keturah. 34. And Abraham begat Isaac. The sons of Isaac; Esau and Israel. 35. ¶ The sons of Esau; Eliphaz, Reuel, and Jeush, and Jaalam, and Korah. 36. The sons of Eliphaz; Teman, and Omar, Zephi, and Gatam, Kenaz, and Timna, and Amalek. 37. The sons of Reuel; Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah. 38. And the sons of Seir; Lotan, and Shobal, and Zibeon, and Anah, and Dishon, and Ezer, and Dishan. 39. And the sons of Lotan; Hori, and Homam: and Timna was Lotan's sister. 40. The sons of Shobal; Alian, and Manahath, and Ebal, Shephi, and Onam. And the son of Zibeon; Aiah, and Anah. 41. The sons of Anah; Dishon. And the sons of Dishon; Amram, and Eshban, and Ithran, and Cheran. 42. The sons of Ezer; Bilhan, and Zavan, and Jakan. The sons of Dishan; Uz, and Aran. 43. ¶ Now these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom, before any king reigned over the children of Israel: Bela the son of Beor: and the name of his city was Dinhabah. 44. And when Bela

Bela was dead, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah, reigned in his stead. 45. And when Jobab was dead, Husham of the land of the Temanites, reigned in his stead. 46. And when Husham was dead, Hadad the son of Bedad (which smote Midian in the field of Moab) reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Avith. 47. And when Hadad was dead, Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead. 48. And when Samlah was dead, Shaul of Rehoboth by the river, reigned in his stead. 49. And when Shaul was dead, Baal-hanan the son of Achbor reigned in stead. 50. And when Baal-hanan was dead, Hadad reigned in his stead: and the name of his city was Pai, and his wife's name was Mehetabel the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab. 51. ¶ Hadad died also. And the dukes of Edom were, duke Timna, duke Elah, due Jetheth, 52. Duke Aholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon. 53. Duke Kenaz, duke Teman, duke Mizbar, 54. Duke Magdiel, duke Iram. These are the dukes of Edom.

All nations but the seed of Abraham are already shaken off from this genealogy; they have no more part or lot in this matter; the Lord's portion is his people; them he keeps account of, and knows by name; but those who are strangers to him he beholds afar off. Not that we are to conclude, that therefore no particular persons of any other nation but the seed of Abraham found favour with God: it was a truth before Peter perceived it, *that in every nation he that feared God, and wrought righteousness was accepted of him*, Multitudes will be brought to heaven out of every nation, Rev. vii. 10. and we are willing to hope there were many good people in the world, that lay out of the pale of God's covenant of peculiarity with Abraham, whose names were in the book of life, though not descended from any of the following families written in this book. *The Lord knows them that are his*. But Israel was a chosen nation; elect in type; and no other nation, in its national capacity, was so dignified and privileged as the Jewish nation was. That is the holy nation, which is the subject of the sacred story; and therefore we are next to shake off, as decently as we can, all the seed of Abraham but the posterity of Jacob only, which were all incorporated into one nation, and joined to the Lord, while the other descendants from Abraham, for ought appears, were estranged both from God and from one another.

1. We shall have little to say to the Ishmaelites; they were the sons of the bond-woman, that were to be cast out, and not to be heirs with the child of promise; and their case was to represent that of the unbelieving Jews, who were rejected, Gal. iv. 22, &c. and therefore there is little notice taken of that nation; only Ishmael's twelve sons are named here, ver. 29, 30, 31. to shew the performance of the promise God made to Abraham in answer to his prayer for him, that for Abraham's sake he should become a great nation, and that, particularly, he should beget twelve princes, Gen. xvii. 20.

2. We shall have little to say to the Midianites, who descended from Abraham's children by Keturah, they were children of the east, probably Job was one of them, and were dismissed from Isaac the heir of the promise, Gen. xxv. 6. and therefore they are only named here, ver. 32. and of Midian (who became most eminent, and perhaps gave demonination to all these families, as Judah to the Jews) one generation more, ver. 33.

3. We shall not have much to say to the Edomites, they had an inveterate enmity to God's Israel; yet because they descended from Esau the son of Isaac, we have here an account of their families, and the names of some of their famous men, ver. 35. to the end: some inconsiderable differences there are between some of the names here, and as we had them Gen. xxxvi. whence this whole account is taken. Three or four names that were written with a vau there, are written with a jod here: probably the pronunciation being altered, as is usual in other languages. We now write many words very differently from what they were written but two hundred years ago.

Let us take occasion from the reading of these genealogies to think, (1.) Of the multitudes that have gone through this world, have acted their parts in it, and then quitted it. Job, even in his early day, saw not only every man drawing after him, but innumerable before him, Job xxi. 33. All these, and all theirs, had their day; many of them made a mighty noise and figure in the world, but their day came to fall, and their place knew them no more. The paths of death are trodden paths, and *vestigia nulla retrorsum*. (2.) Of the providence of God which keeps up the generations of men, and so preserves that degenerate race though guilty and obnoxious, it being upon earth. How easily could he cut it off, without either a deluge or a conflagration? Write but all the children of men childless, as some are, and in a few years the earth will be eased of its burden under which it groans; but the divine patience not only lets the trees grow that cumber the ground, but lets them propagate. As one generation, even of sinful men, passeth away, another comes, (Eccl. i. 4. Numb. xxxii. 14.) and will do while the earth remains. *Destroy it not for a blessing is in it*.

C H A P. II.

We are now come to what was principally intended, the register of the children of Israel, that distinguished people, that were to dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations. Here is, 1. The names of the twelve sons of Israel, ver. 1, 2. And then, 2. An account of the tribe of Judah, which has the precedency, not so much for the sake of David, as for the sake of the Son of David our Lord, who sprang out of Judah, Heb. vii. 14. (1.) The first descendants from Judah down to Jesse, ver. 3—12. (2.) The children of Jesse, ver. 13—17. (3.) The posterity of Hezron, not only through Ram, from whom David came, but Caleb, ver. 18—20. Segub, ver. 21—24. Jerahmeel, ver. 25—33. and so to ver. 41. and more by Caleb, ver. 42—49. with the family of Caleb the son of Hur, ver. 60—55. The best exposition we can have of this and the following chapters, and which will give the clearest view of them, is those genealogical tables which were published with some of the first impressions of the last English Bible about a hundred years ago, and continued for some time; and it is pity but they were revived in some of our latter editions; for they are of great use to those who diligently search the scriptures. They are said to be drawn up by that great master in scripture learning Mr. Hugh Broughton. We meet with them sometimes in old Bibles.

1. THESE are the sons of Israel; Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, 2. Dan, Joseph, and Benjamin. Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. 3. ¶ The sons of Judah: Er, and Onan, and Shela: which three were born unto him of the daughter of Shua the Canaanitess. And Er the first born of Judah was evil in the sight of the LORD, and he slew him. 4. And Tamar his daughter in law bare him Pharez and Zerah. All the sons of Judah were five, 5. The sons of Pharez; Hezron and Hamul. 6. And the sons of Zerah, Zimri, and Ethan, and Heman, and Calcol, and Dara: five of them in all. 7. And the sons of Carmi; Achar, the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the thing accursed. 8. And the son of Ethan; Azariah. 9. The sons also of Hezron that were born unto him: Jerahmeel, and Ram, and Chelubai, 10. And Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon, prince of the children of Judah: 11. And Nahshon begat Salma, and Salma begat Boaz, 12. And Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse, 13. ¶ And Jesse begat his first-born Eliab, and Abinadab the second, and Shimma the third. 11. Nethaneel the fourth, Raddai the fifth. 15. Ozen the sixth, David the seventh: 16. Whose sisters were Zeruiah, and Abigail. And the sons of Zeruiah; Abishai, and Joab, and Asahel, three. 17. And Abigail bare Amasa: and the father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmaelite.

Here is, 1. The family of Jacob; his twelve sons are here named, that illustrious number so often celebrated almost throughout the whole bible, from the first to the last book of it: at every turn we meet with the twelve tribes that descended from these twelve patriarchs: the personal character of several of them was none of the best; the four first was much blemished, and yet the covenant was entailed on their seed; for it was of grace, free grace, that it was said, *Jacob have I loved; not of works left any man should boast*.

2. The family of Judah. That tribe was most praised, most increased, and most dignified of any of the tribes, and therefore the genealogy of it is the first and largest of them all. In the account here given of the first branches of that illustrious tree which Christ was to be the top branch of, we meet, first, with some that were very bad. Here is Er, Judah's eldest son, that was evil in the sight of the Lord, and was cut off in the beginning of his days by a stroke of divine vengeance, the Lord slew him, ver. 3. His next brother Onan was no better, and sared no better. Here is Tamar, with whom Judah her father-in-law committed incest, ver. 4. And here is Achan, also called Achar, a troubler, that troubled Israel by taking of the accursed thing, ver. 7. Note, The best and most honourable families may have those belong to them that are their blemishes. 2. With some that are wise and good; as Heman and Ethan, Calcol and Dara, who were not, perhaps, the immediate sons of Zerah, but descendants from him, and are named because they were the glory of their father's house: for when the Holy Ghost would magnify the wisdom of Solomon, he saith, he was wiser than those four men, who though the sons of Mahol, are called Ezrahites, from Zerah, 1 Kings iv. 31. That four brothers should be eminent for wisdom and grace, was a rare thing. (3.) With some that were very great, as Nahshon, who was a prince of the tribe of Judah when the camp of Israel was formed in the wilderness, and so led the van in that glorious march; and Salma, or Salmon, who was in that post of honour when they entered Canaan, ver. 10, 11.

3. The family of Jesse, of which a particular account is kept, for the sake of David, and the son of David, who is a rod out of the stem of Jesse, Isa. xi. 1. Hence it appears, that David was a seventh son; that his three great commanders, Joab, Abishai, and Asahel, were the sons of one of his sisters; and Amasa of another. Three of the four went down slain to the pit, though they were the terror of the mighty.

18. ¶ And Caleb the son of Hezron begat children of Azubah his wife, and of Jerioth: her sons are these; Jesher, and Shobab, and Ardon. 19. And when Azubah was dead, Caleb took unto him Ephrath, which bare him Hur. 20. And Hur begat Uri, and Uri begat Bezaleel. 21. ¶ And afterwards Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir, the father of Gilead, whom he married when he was threescore years old, and she bare him Segub. 22. And Segub begat Jair, who had three and twenty cities in the land of Gilead. 23. And he took Geshur, and Aram with the towns of Jair, from them, with Kenath and the towns thereof, even threescore cities: all these belonged to the sons of Machir, the father of Gilead. 24. And after that Hezron was dead in Caleb-ephrahah, then Abiah, Hezron's wife, bare him Asher the father of Tekoa. 25. ¶ And the sons of Jerahmeel the first born of Hezron were, Ram the first-born, and Bunah and Orem, and Ozem, and Ahijah, 26. Jerahmeel had also another wife, whose name was Atarah, she was the mother of Onam. 27. And the sons of Ram the first-born of Jerahmeel were Maaz, and Jamin, and Eker. 28. And the sons of Onam were Shammai and Jada. And the sons of Shammai; Nadab, and Abishur. 29. And the name of the wife of Abishur was Abihail, and she bare him Ahban, and Molid. 30. And the sons of Nadab; Seled, and Appaim: but Seled died without children. 31. And the sons of Appaim; Ishi. And the sons of Ishi; Sheshan. And the children of Sheshan; Ahlah. 32. And the

the sons of Jada the brother of Shammai; Jether, and Jonathan: and Jether died without children. 33. And the sons of Jonathan: Peleth and Zaza. These were the sons of Jerahmeel. 34. ¶ Now Sheshan had no sons, but daughters: and Sheshan had a servant, an Egyptian, whose name was Jarha. 35. And Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant to wife; and the bare him Attai. 36. And Attai begat Nathan, and Nathan begat Zabad, 37. And Zabad begat Ephlal, and Ephlal begat Obed, 38. And Obed begat Jehu, and Jehu begat Azariah, 39. And Azariah begat Helez, and Helez begat Eleasah, 40. And Eleasah begat Sisamai, and Sisamai begat Shallum, 41. And Shallum begat Jekamiah, and Jekamiah begat Elishama. 42. ¶ Now the sons of Caleb the brother of Jerahmeel were, Metha his first-born, which was the father of Ziph: and the sons of Mareshah the father of Hebron. 43. And the sons of Hebron; Korah, and Tappuah, and Rekem, and Shema. 44. And Shema begat Raham, the father of Jorkoam: and Rekem begat Shammai. 45. And the son of Shammai was Maon: and Maon was the father of Beth-zur. 46. And Ephah, Caleb's concubine, bare Haran, and Moza, and Gazez: and Haran begat Gazez. 47. And the sons of Jahdai; Regem, and Jotham, and Geshan, and Pelet, and Ephah, and Shaaph. 48. Machah, Caleb's concubine, bare Sheber, and Tirhanah, 49. She bare also Shaaph the father of Madmannah, Sheva the father of Machbenah, and the father of Gibeaz: and the daughter of Caleb was Achsa. 50. ¶ These were the sons of Caleb the son of Hur, the first-born of Ephrath; Shobal the father of Kirjath-jearim. 51. Salma the father of Beth-lehem, Hareph the father of Beth-gader. 52. And Shobal the father of Kirjath-jearim had sons; Haroeh, and half of the Manahethites. 53. And the families of Kirjath-jearim; the Ithrites, and the Puhites, and the Shumathites, and the Mishraites; of them came the Zareathites, and Eshtaulites. 54. the sons of Sarma; Beth-lehem, and the Netophathites, Ataroth, the house of Joab, and half of the Manahethites, the Zorites. 55. And the families of the scribes which dwelt at Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and Suchathites. These are the Kenites that came of Hemath, the father of the house of Rechab.

The persons mentioned in the foregoing paragraph, are most of them such as we read of, and most of them such as we read much of in other scriptures. But there are very few of these here that are ever mentioned any where else. It should seem, the tribe of Judah were more full and exact in their genealogies than any other of the tribes, in which we must acknowledge a special providence for the clearing of the genealogy of Christ.

1. Here we find Bezaleel, who was head workmen in building the tabernacle, *Exod. xxxi. 2.*

2. Hezron, who was the son of Pharez, *ver. 5.* is the father of all this progeny. His sons, Caleb and Jerahmeel, being very fruitful, and he himself likewise even in his old age; for he left his wife with child when he died, *ver. 21.* This Hezron was one of the seventy that went down with Jacob into Egypt. *Gen. xlv. 12.* there his family thus increased, as other of the oppressed families there did; we cannot but suppose he died during the Israelites bondage in Egypt, and yet it is here said he died in Caleb-ephrahah, i. e. Beth-lehem, in the land of Canaan, *ver. 24.* Perhaps, though the body of the people continued in Egypt, yet some that were more active than the rest, at least before their bondage came to be extreme, visited Canaan some times, and got footing there, though afterwards they lost it. The achievements of Jair here mentioned, *ver. 22, 23.* we had an account of, *Numb. xxxii. 41.* and it is supposed were long after the conquest of Canaan. The Jews say, Hezron married his third wife when he was sixty years old, *ver. 21.* and another after, *ver. 24.* because he had a great desire of posterity in the family of Pharez, from whom the Messiah was to descend. Here is mention of one that died without children, *ver. 30.* and another *ver. 32.* and of one that had no sons but daughters, *ver. 34.* Let those that are either of these ways afflicted, not think their case new or singular. Providence orders these affairs of families by an uncontrollable sovereignty, as pleaseth him, giving children or withholding them, or giving all of one sex. He is not bound to please us, but we are to acquiesce in his good pleasure: To those that love him, he will himself be better than ten sons; and give them in his house a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters. Let not them therefore that are written childless, envy the families that are built up, and replenished. Shall our eye be evil because God's is good? Here is mention of one who had an only daughter, and married her to his servant an Egyptian, *ver. 34, 35.* If it be mentioned to his praise, we must suppose, that this Egyptian was profelyted to the Jewish religion, and that he was very eminent for wisdom and virtue, else it had not become a true-born Israelite to match a daughter to him, especially an only daughter. If Egyptians become converts, and servants do worthily, neither their parentage nor their servitude should be a bar to their preferment. Such an one this Egyptian servant might be, that she who married him might live as happily with him as if she had married one of the rulers of her tribe. The pedigree of several of these terminate not in a person, but in a place or country, as one is said to be father of Kirjath-jearim, *ver. 50.* another of Beth-lehem, *ver. 51.* which was afterwards David's city, because these places fell to their lot in the division of the land. Lastly, here are some that are said to be families of scribes, *ver. 55.* such as keep up learning in their family, especially scripture learning, and taught the people the good knowledge of God. Among all these great families, we are glad to find some that were families of scribes: Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets! all the families of Israel families of scribes, well instructed to the kingdom of heaven, and able to bring out of their treasury things new and old.

No. LIX.

C H A P. III.

Of all the families of Israel, none so illustrious as the family of David. That is the family which was mentioned in the chapter before, *ver. 15.* Here we have a full account of it. (1.) David's sons, *ver. 1—9.* (2.) His successors in the throne as long as the kingdom continued, *ver. 10—16.* (3.) The remains of his family in and after the captivity, *ver. 17—24.* From this family, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.

1. NOW these were the sons of David, which were born unto him in Hebron; the first-born Ammon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess: the second Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelitess: 2. The third, Absalom the son of Maachah, the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur: the fourth, Adonijah, the son of Haggith: 3. The fifth, Shephatiah, of Abital: the sixth, Ithream by Eglah his wife. 4. These six were born unto him in Hebron; and there he reigned seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years. 5. And these were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shimea, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, four, of Bath-shua the daughter of Ammiel: 6. Ibhar also, and Elishama, and Eliphelet. 7. And Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia. 8. And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine. 9. These were all the sons of David, beside the sons of the concubines, and Tamar their sister.

We had an account of David's sons, *2 Sam. iii. 2, &c.* and *chap. 14, &c.* 1. He had many sons, and no doubt wrote as he thought, *Psal. cxxvii. 5.* Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of these arrows. 2. Some of them were a grief to him, as Ammon, Absalom, and Adonijah. And we do not read of any of them that imitated his piety and devotion, except Solomon, and he came far short of it. 3. One of them which Bathsheba bare to him, he called Nathan, probably in honour of Nathan the prophet, who reproved him for his sin in that matter, and was instrumental to bring him to repentance. It seems he loved him the better for it as long as he lived. It is wisdom to esteem those our best friends that deal faithfully with us. From this son of David our Lord Jesus descended, as appears *Luke iii. 31.* 4. Here are two Elishamas, and two Eliphelets, *ver. 6.* and *ver. 8.* probably the two former were dead, and therefore David called two more by their names; which he would not have done if there had been any ill omen in it, as some fancy. 5. David had many concubines, but their children are not named, as not worthy of the honour, *ver. 9.* the rather because the concubines had dealt treacherously with David in the affair of Absalom. 6. Of all David's sons, Solomon was chosen to succeed him, perhaps not for any personal merits, his wisdom was God's gift; but so, *Father, because it seemed good unto thee.*

10. And Solomon's son was Rehoboam. Abia his son, Afa his son, Jehoshaphat his son, 11. Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, 12. Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son, 13. Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, 14. Ammon his son, Josiah his son. 15. And the sons of Josiah were, the first-born Johanan, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum. 16. And the sons of Jehoiakim: Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son. 17. ¶ And the sons of Jeconiah; Affir, Salathiel his son, 18. Malchiram also, and Pedaiah, and Shenazar, Jecamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah. 19. And the sons of Pedaiah were Zerubbabel, and Shimei, and the sons of Zerubbabel; Meshullam, and Hananiah, and Shelomith their sister: 20. And Hashubah, and Ohel, and Berechiah, and Hasadiah, Jushab-hesed, five. 21. And the sons of Hananiah: Pelatiah, and Jesaijah: the sons of Rephaiah. the sons of Arnan, the sons of Obadiah, the sons of Shechaniah. 22. And the sons of Shechaniah; Shemaiah: and the sons of Shemaiah; Hattush, and Igeal, and Bariah, and Neariah, and Shaphat, six. 23. And the sons of Neariah; Elioenai, and Hezekiah, and Azrikam, three. 24. And the sons of Elioenai were, Hodaiah, and Eliathib, and Pelaiah, and Akkub, and Johanan, and Dalaiah, and Anani, seven.

David having nineteen sons, we may suppose them to have raised many noble families in Israel whom we never hear of in the history; but the scripture gives us an account only of the descendants of Solomon here, and of Nathan, *Luke iii.* The rest had the honour to be the sons of David, but these only had the honour to be related to the Messiah. The sons of Nathan were his fathers, as man; the sons of Solomon his predecessors, as king. We have here,

(1.) The great and celebrated names by which the line of David is drawn down to the captivity; the kings of Judah in a lineal succession; the history of whom we have at large in the two books of Kings, and shall meet with again in the second book of Chronicles. Seldom has a crown gone in a direct line from father to son for seventeen descents together as here. This was the recompence of David's piety. About the captivity the lineal descent was interrupted, and the crown went from one brother to another, and from a nephew to an uncle; which was a preface of the eclipsing of the glory of that house.

(2.) The less famous, and most of them very obscure, names in which the house of David subsisted after the captivity. The only famous man of that house that we meet with at their return from captivity, was Zerubbabel, elsewhere called the son of Salathiel, but appearing here to be his grandson, *ver. 17, 18, 19.* which is usual in scripture. Belsazzar is called Nebuchadnezzar's

chadnezzar's son, but was his grandson. Salathiel is said to be son of Jeconiah, because adopted by him: and some think succeeded him in the dignity to which he was restored by Evilmerodach; otherwise Jeconiah was written childless: he was the *signet God plucked from his right hand*, Jer. xxii. 24. and in his room Zerubbabel was placed: and therefore God saith to him, *Hag. i. 23. I will make thee as a signet*. The posterity of Zerubbabel here, bear not the same names that they do in the genealogies, *Matt. i. or Luke iii.* but those no doubt, were taken from the then Herald's office; the public registers which the priests kept of all the families of Judah, especially that of David.

The last person named in this chapter is Anani, of whom Bishop Patrick saith the Targum adds these words; *He is the king Messiah, who is to be revealed*; and some of the Jewish writers give this reason, because it is said, *Dan. vii. 13. the son of man came in Anani, (with the clouds of heaven.)* The reason, indeed, is very foreign and far-fetched; but that learned man thinks it may be made use of as an evidence that their minds were always full of the thoughts of the Messiah, and that they expected it would not be very long after the days of Zerubbabel before the set time of his approach would come.

C H A P. IV.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A further account of the genealogies of the tribe of Judah, the most numerous and most famous of all the tribes. The posterity of Shobal the son of Hur, ver. 1—4. Of Ashur the posthumous son of Hezron, who was mentioned chap. ii. 24. with something particular concerning Jabez, ver. 5—10. Of Chelub, and others, ver. 11—20. Of Sholah, ver. 21—23. (2.) An account of the posterity and cities of Simeon, their conquest of Gedor, and of the Amalekites in mount Seir, ver. 24—43.

1. **T**HE sons of Judah; Pharez, Hezron, and Carmi, and Hur, and Shobal. 2. And Reaiah the son of Shobal begat Jahath, and Jahath begat Ahumai, and Lahad. These are the families of the Zorathites. 3. And these were of the father of Etam: Jezreel, and Ishma, and Idbash; and the name of their sister was Hazel-cloni. 4. And Penuel the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Ushah. These are the sons of Hur, the first-born of Ephratah, the father of Bethle-hem. 5. ¶ And Ashur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah, and Naarah. 6. And Naarah bare him, Ahuzam, and Hopher, and Temeni, and Haahashtari. These were the sons of Naarah. 7. And the sons of Helah were Zereth, and Jezoar, and Ethnan. 8. And Coz begat Anub, and Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel, the son of Harum. 9. ¶ And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. 10. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.

One reason, no doubt, why Ezra is here most particular in the register of the tribe of Judah, is, because that tribe was it which, with its appendages, Simeon, Benjamin, and Levi, made up the kingdom of Judah, which not only long survived the other tribes in Canaan, but in process of time, now when this was written, returned out of captivity, when the generality of the other tribes were lost in the kingdom of Assyria.

The remarkable person in this paragraph is Jabez: it is not said whose son he was, nor doth it appear in what age he lived: but it should seem he was the founder of one of the families of Aharhel, mentioned, ver. 8. Here is,

1. The reason of his name. His mother gave him the name, with this reason, *because I bare him with sorrow*, ver. 9. All children are born with sorrow: for to the sentence is upon the woman, *in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children*; but some with much more sorrow than others. Usually the sorrow in bearing is afterwards forgotten, *for joy that the child is born*: but here, it seems, it was extraordinary, that it was remembered when the child came to be circumcised, and care taken to perpetuate the remembrance of it while he lived. Perhaps the mother called him Jabez as Rachel called her son Benoni, when she was dying of the sorrows or if she recovered it, yet thus she recorded it. 1. That it might be a continual memorandum to herself to be thankful to God as long as she lived, for supporting her under and bringing her through that sorrow. It may be of use to be often minded of our sorrows, that we may always have such thoughts of things as we had in the day of our affliction, and may learn to rejoice with trembling. (2.) That it might likewise be a memorandum to him, what this world is, into which she bare him, a vale of tears, in which he must expect few days and full of trouble: the sorrow he carried in his name might help to put a seriousness upon his spirit. It might also mind him to love and honour his mother, and labour in every thing to be a comfort to her who brought him into the world with so much sorrow. It is piety in children thus to requite their parents, 1 Tim. v. 4.

2. The eminency of his character. *He was more honourable than his brethren*, qualified above them by the divine grace, and dignified above them by the divine providence: They did virtuously, but he excelled them all. Now the sorrow with which his mother bare him, was abundantly recompensed. That son which of all the rest cost her most dear, she was most happy in, and was made glad in proportion to the affliction, *Psal. xc. 15.* We are not told upon what account he was more honourable than his brethren; whether because he raised a greater estate, or was preferred to the magistracy, or signalized himself in war; we have most reason to think it was upon the account of his learning and piety, not only because these, above any thing, put honour upon a man; but because we have reason to think in these Jabez was eminent. (1.) In learning: because we find that *the families of the scribes dwelt at Jabez*, chap. ii. 35. a city which, it is likely, took its name from his name. The Jews say he was a famous doctor of the law, and left many disciples behind him. And it should seem by the mentioning of him to abruptly here, that his name was well known when Ezra wrote this. (2.) In piety; because we find here, that he was a praying man. His inclination to devotion made him truly honourable: and by prayer he obtained those blessings from God, which added much to his honour. The way to be truly great, is to be truly good, and to pray much.

3. The prayer he made, probably like Solomon's prayer for wisdom, just when he was setting out in the world: he set himself to acknowledge God in all his ways, put himself under the divine blessing and protection, and prospered accordingly. Perhaps these were the heads on which he enlarged in his daily prayers: to this purpose it was his constant practice to pray alone, and with his family, as Daniel. Some think it was upon some particular occasion, that he was straitened and threatened by his enemies, that he prayed this prayer. Observe,

1. To whom he prayed, not to any of the gods of the Gentiles: no, he called on the God of Israel, the living and true God, who alone can hear and answer prayer; and in prayer had an eye to him as the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, the God with whom Jacob wrestled and prevailed, and was thence called Israel.

2. What was the nature of his prayer. (1.) As the margin reads it, it was a solemn vow, *If thou wilt bless me indeed, &c.* and then the sense is imperfect, but may easily be filled up from Jacob's vow, or some such like, *then thou shalt be my God*. He doth not express his promise, but leaves it to be understood; either because he was afraid to promise in his own strength, or because he resolved to devote himself entirely to God. He doth, as it were, give God a blank paper, let him write what he pleaseth: Lord, if thou wilt bless me, and keep me, do what thou wilt with me, I will be at thy command and dispose for ever. (2.) As the text reads it, it was the language of a most ardent and affectionate desire, *O that thou wouldest bless me!*

3. What was the matter of his prayer. Four things he prayed for, (1.) That God would bless him indeed. That blessing thou wilt bless me; bless me greatly, with manifold and abundant blessings. Perhaps he has an eye to the promise God made to Abraham, *Gen. xxii. 17. that in blessing I will bless thee*. Let the blessing of Abraham come upon me. Spiritual blessings are the best blessings; and those are blessed indeed who are blessed with them. God's blessings are real things, and produce real effects. We can but wish a blessing, he commands it: those whom he blesteth, are blessed indeed. (2.) That he would enlarge his coast; that he would prosper his endeavours for the increase of what fell to his lot, either by work or war. That God would enlarge our hearts, and so enlarge our portion in himself, and in the heavenly Canaan, ought to be our desire and prayer. (3.) That God's hand might be with him: The prayer of Moses for this tribe of Judah was, *That his own hands might be sufficient for him*, Deut. xxxiii. 7. But Jabez expects not that, unless he have God's hand with him, and the presence of his power. God's hand with us, to lead us, protect us, strengthen us, and to work all our works in us and for us, is indeed a hand sufficient for us, all-sufficient. (4.) That he would keep him from evil; the evil of sin, the evil of trouble, all the evil designs of his enemies, that they might not hurt, nor grieve him, not make him a Jabez indeed, a man of sorrow. In the original there is an allusion to his name; *Father in heaven, deliver me from evil*.

4. What was the success of his prayer. God granted him that which he requested; prospered him remarkably, and gave him success in his undertakings, in his studies, in his worldly business, in his conflicts with the Canaanites; and so he became more honourable than his brethren. God was of old always ready to hear prayer, and his ear is not yet heavy.

11. ¶ And Chelub the brother of Shuah, begat Mehir, which was the father of Eshton. 12. And Eshton begat Beth-rapha, and Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Ir-nahash. These are the men of Rechab. 13. And the sons of Kenaz; Othniel, and Seraiah: and the sons of Othniel; Hathath. 14. And Meonothai begat Ophrah: and Seraiah begat Joab, the father of the valley of Charashim, for they were craftsmen. 15. And the sons of Caleb the son of Jephunneh: Iru, Elah, and Naam: and the sons of Elah, even Kenaz. 16. And the sons of Jehaleleel; Ziph, and Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel. 17. And the sons of Ezra were, Jether, and Mered, and Ephraim, and Jalon: and the bare Miriam, and Shammah, and Ishbah, the father of Eshtemoa. 18. And his wife Jehudijah bare Jered the father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Socho, and Jekuthiel, the father of Zanoah. And these are the sons of Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh, which Mered took. 19. And the sons of his wife Hodiah, the sister of Naham, the father of Keilah the Garmite and Eshtemoa the Maachathite. 20. And the sons of Shimon were, Amnon, and Rinnah, Ben-hanan, and Tilon. And the sons of Ishi were, Zoheth, and Ben-zoheth. 21. ¶ The sons of Shelah, the son of Judah, were, Er the father of Lecah, and Laadah the father of Mareah, and the families of the house of them that wrought fine linen, of the house of Ashbea. 22. And Jokim, and the men of Chozeba, and Joash, and Saraph, who had the dominion in Moab, and Jashubi-lehem. And these are ancient things. 23. These were the potters, and those that dwelt amongst plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work.

We may observe in these verses,

1. That here is a whole family of craftsmen, handicraft tradesmen, that applied themselves to all sorts of manufactures, in which they were ingenious and industrious above their neighbours, ver. 14. There was a valley where they lived, which was from them called *The valley of craftsmen*: They that are craftsmen, are not therefore to be looked upon as mean men. These craftsmen, though two of a trade often disagree, yet chose to live together, for the improving of arts by comparing notes, and that they might support one another's reputation.

2. That one of these married Pharaoh's daughter, ver. 18. that was the common name of the kings of Egypt. If an Israelite in Egypt, before the bondage began, while Joseph's merits were yet fresh in mind, was preferred to be the king's son-in-law, it is not thought to be strange, few Israelites could, like Moses, refuse an alliance with the court.

3. That another is said to be the father of the house of them that wrought fine linen, ver. 21. It is inserted in their genealogy as their honour, that they were the best weavers in the kingdom; and they brought up their children, from one generation to another, to the same business, not aiming to make them gentlemen. The Laadah is said to be the father of them that wrought fine linen, as before the flood, Jubal is said to be the father of musicians, and Jabel of shepherds, &c. His posterity inhabited the city of Mareah,

Marethah, the manufacture, or staple commodity of which place was linen cloth, with which their kings and princes were clothed.

4. That another family had had dominion in Moab, but were now in servitude in Babylon, ver. 22, 23. (1.) It was found among the ancient things, that they had the dominion in Moab, probably in David's time, when that country was conquered, they transplanted themselves thither, and were put in places of power there, which they held for several generations; but this was a great while ago, time out of mind. (2.) Their posterity were now potters and gardeners, as is supposed, in Babylon, where they dwelt with the king for his work, got a good livelihood by their industry, and therefore cared not for returning with their brethren to their own land, after the years of captivity were expired. They that now have dominion, know not what their posterity may be reduced to, nor what mean employments they may be glad to take up with. But they were unworthy the name of Israelites that would dwell among plants and hedges, rather than be at the pains to return to Canaan.

24. ¶ The sons of Simeon were, Nemuel, and Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, and Shaul: 25. Shallum his son, Mibsam his son, Mishma his son. 26. And the sons of Mishma; Hamuel his son, Zacchur his son, Shimei his son. 27. And Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brethren had not many children, neither did all their family multiply, like to the children of Judah. 28. And they dwelt at Beer-sheba, and Moladah, and Hazar-shual, 29. And at Bilhah, and at Ezem, and at Tolad. 30. And at Bethuel, and at Hormah, and at Ziklag. 31. And at Beth-marcaboth, and Hazar-fusim, and at Beth-birei, and at Shaaraim: These were their cities unto the reign of David. 32. And their villages were, Etam, and Ain, Rimmon, and Tochen, and Ashan, five cities. 33. And all their villages that were round about the same cities unto Baal. These were their habitations, and their genealogy. 34. And Meshobab, and Jamlech, and Joshah, the son of Amaziah. 35. And Joel, and Jehu, the son of Josibiah, the son of Seraiah, the son of Asiel. 36. And Elioenai, and Jaakobah, and Jeshohaiah, and Asaiah, and Adiel, and Jesimiel, and Benaiah. 37. And Ziza the son of Shiphi, the son of Allon, the son of Jedajah, the son of Shimri, the son of Shemaiah. 38. These mentioned by their names were princes in their families: and the house of their fathers increased greatly. 39. ¶ And they went to the entrance of Gedor, even unto the east-side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks. 40. And they found fat pasture and good, and the land was wide, and quiet, and peaceable: for they of Ham had dwelt there of old. 41. And these written by name, came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and smote their tents, and the habitations that were found there, and destroyed them utterly unto this day, and dwelt in their rooms: because there was pasture there for their flocks. 42. And some of them, even of the sons of Simeon, five hundred men, went to mount Seir, having for their captains Pelatiah, and Neariah, and Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi. 43. And they smote the rest of the Amalekites that were escaped, and dwelt there unto this day.

We have here some of the genealogies of the tribe of Simeon, (though it was not a tribe of any great note) especially the princes of that tribe, ver. 33. Of this tribe it is said, that they increased greatly, but not like to the children of Judah, ver. 27. They whom God increase ought to be thankful, though they see others that are more increased.

Here are, 1. The cities allotted them, ver. 28. Of which see Josh. xix. 1, &c. when it is said, they were there unto the reign of David, it intimates, that when the ten tribes revolted from the house of David, many of the Simeonites quitted these cities, because they lay within Judah, and feared themselves elsewhere.

2. The ground they got elsewhere. When those of this tribe that revolted from the house of David were carried captive with the rest into Assyria, those that adhered to Judah were remarkably owned of God, and prospered in their endeavours to enlarge their coasts. It was in the days of Hezekiah that a generation of Simeonites, whose tribe had long sneaked and truckled, was spirited to make these bold efforts. 1. Some of them attacked a place in Arabia, (as it should seem) called the entrance of Gedor, inhabited by the posterity of cursed Ham, ver. 40. made themselves masters of it, and dwelt there. This adds to the glory of Hezekiah's pious reign, that as his kingdom in general prospered, so did particular families. It is said, they found fat pastures, and yet the land was quiet; even then when the kings of Assyria were giving disturbance to all their neighbours, this and escaped their alarms: the inhabitants being shepherds, that molested none, were not themselves molested, till the Simeonites came and drove them out, and succeeded them not only in the plenty, but in the peace of their land. Those that thus dwelt, (as we do) in a fruitful country, and whose land is wide, and quiet, and peaceable, have reason to own themselves indebted to that God, who appoints the bounds of their habitation. 2. Others of them, to the number of five hundred, under the command of four brethren, here named, made a descent upon mount Seir, and smote the remainders of the devoted Amalekites, and took possession of their country, ver. 42, 43. Now the curses on Ham and Amalek had a further accomplishment, when they seemed dormant, if not dead: As had also the curse on Simeon, that he should be divided and scattered, Gen. xlix. 7. yet to him it was turned into a blessing; for the families of Simeon, that thus transplanted themselves into those distant countries, are said to dwell there unto this day, ver. 43. by which it should seem they escaped the calamities of the captivity. Providence sometimes sends those out of trouble that are designed for preservation.

C H A P. V.

This chapter gives us some account of the two tribes and a half that were seated on the other side Jordan. (1.) Of Reuben, ver. 1—10. (2.) Of Gad, ver. 11—17. (3.) Of the half tribe of Manasseh, ver. 23, 24. Concerning all three acting in conjunction, we are told, 1. How they conquered the Hagarites, ver. 18—22. 2. How they were at length themselves conquered, and made captives by the king of Assyria, because they had forsaken God, ver. 25, 26.

1. **N**OW the sons of Reuben the first-born of Israel (for he was the first-born; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. 2. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's.) 3. The sons, I say, of Reuben the first-born of Israel were, Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. 4. The sons of Joel; Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son, 5. Micah his son, Reaia his son, Baal his son, 6. Beerah his son, whom Tilgath-pilnezer king of Assyria, carried away captive: he was prince of the Reubenites. 7. And his brethren by their families (when the genealogy of their generations was reckoned) were the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah, 8. And Bela, the son of Azaz, the son of Shema, the son of Joel, who dwelt in Aroer, even unto Nebo and Baal-meon. 9. And eastward he inhabited unto the entering in of the wilderness from the river Euphrates: because their cattle were multiplied in the land of Gilead. 10. And in the days of Saul they made war with the Hagarites, who fell by their hand: and they dwelt in their tents throughout all the east-land of Gilead. 11. ¶ And the children of Gad dwelt over against them, in the land of Bashan unto Saleah: 12. Joel the chief, and Shapham the next, and Jaanai, and Shaphat in Bashan. 13. And their brethren of the house of their fathers were, Michael, and Meshullam, and Sheba, and Jorai, and Jachan, and Zia, and Heber, seven. 14. These are the children of Abihail the son of Huri, the son of Jorah, the son of Gilead, the son of Michael, the son of Jeshishai, the son of Jahdo, the son of Buz, 15. Ahi the son of Abdiel, the son of Guni, chief of the house of their fathers. 16. And they dwelt in Gilead in Bashan, and in her towns, and in all the suburbs of Sharon, upon their borders. 17. All these were reckoned by genealogies in the days of Jotham king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel.

We have here an extract out of the genealogies.

1. Of the tribe of Reuben; where we have, (1.) The reason why this tribe was thus postponed; it is confessed he was the first-born of Israel, and upon that account might challenge the pre-eminence, but he forfeited his birth-right by defiling his father's concubine, and was for that sentenced not to excel, Gen. xlix. 4. Sin lessens men, throws them down from their excellency; seventh-commandment sins especially, leave an indelible stain upon men's names and families, a reproach which time shall not wipe away. Reuben's seed to the last bear the disgrace of Reuben's sin. Yet though that tribe was degraded, it was not discarded, or disinherited: the falling of the honour of an Israelite, is not the losing of his happiness. Reuben loses his birth-right, yet it doth not devolve upon Simeon, the next in order, for it was typical, and therefore must attend not the course of nature, but the choice of grace. The advantages of the birth-right were dominion and a double portion: Reuben having forfeited these, it was thought too much, that both should be transferred to any one, and therefore they were divided. (1.) Joseph had the double portion; for two tribes descended from him, Ephraim and Manasseh, that had each of them a child's part; for so Jacob by faith blessed them, Heb. xi. 21. Gen. xlviii. 15—22. and each of those two was as considerable, and made as good a figure as any one of the twelve, except Judah. But, (2.) Judah had the dominion, on him the dying patriarch entailed the scepter, Gen. xlix. 10. Of him came the chief ruler, David first, and in the fulness of time Messiah the prince, Micah v. 2. This honour was secured to Judah, though the birth-right was Joseph's and having this, he needed not envy him the double portion.

2. The genealogy of the princes of this tribe, the topping family of it (yet many, no doubt, omitted) to Beerah, who was head of this clan when the king of Assyria carried them captive, ver. 4—6. Perhaps he is mentioned, as prince of the Reubenites at that time, because he did not do his part to prevent it.

3. The enlargement of the coasts of this tribe: they increasing, and their cattle being multiplied, they crowded out their neighbours the Hagarites, and extended their conquests, though not to the river Euphrates, yet to the wilderness which abutted upon that river, ver. 9, 10. Thus God did for his people as he promised them, he cast out the enemy from before them by little and little, and gave them their land as they had occasion for it, Exod. xxiii. 30.

2. Of the tribe of Gad; some great families of that tribe are here named, ver. 12. Seven that were the children of Abihail, whose pedigree is carried upward from the son to the father, ver. 13, 15, as that, ver. 4, 5. is brought downward from father to son. These genealogies were perfected in the days of Jotham king of Judah, but were begun some years before, in the reign of Jeroboam II. king of Israel. What particular reason there was for taking these accounts then, doth not appear: but it was just before they were carried away captive by the Assyrians, as appears, 2 Kings xv. 29—32. When the judgments of God were ready to break out against them for their wretched degeneracy and apostacy, then were they priding themselves in their

their genealogies, that they were the children of the covenant; as the Jews in our Saviour's time, who, when they were ripe for ruin, boasted, *We have Abraham to our father.* Or, there might be a special providence in it, and a favourable intimation, that though they were for the present cast out, they were not cast off for ever; what we design to call for hereafter, we keep an inventory of.

18. ¶ The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, were four and forty thousand and seven hundred and threescore, that went out to the war. 19. And they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephthi, and Nodab. 20. And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that were with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them; because they put their trust in him. 21. And they took away their cattle; of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand, and of men an hundred thousand. 22. For there fell down many slain, because the war was of God. And they dwelt in their steads until the captivity. 23. ¶ And the children of the half-tribe of Manasseh dwelt in the land: they increased from Bashan unto Baal-hermon, and Senir, and unto mount Hermon. 24. And these were the heads of the house of their fathers, even Ephraim, and Ishi, and Eliel, and Azriel, and Jeremiah, and Hodaviah, and Jahdiel, mighty men of valour, famous men, and heads of the house of their fathers. 25. ¶ And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God destroyed before them. 26. And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-pilezer king of Assyria, and he carried them away (even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh) and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.

The heads of the half tribe of Manasseh that were seated on the other side Jordan, are named here, ver. 23, 24. Their lot at first was Bashan only; but afterwards they increased so much in wealth and power, that they spread far north, even unto Hermon.

But two things are here recorded concerning these tribes on the other side Jordan, in which they all went partners. They all shared,

1. In a glorious victory over the Hagarites, so the Ishmaelites were now called, to mind them that they were the sons of the bond-women that were cast out. We are not told when this victory was obtained, whether it be the same with that of the Reubenites, which is said, ver. 10. to be in the days of Saul, or whether the success of one of these tribes, animated and excited the other two to join with them in another expedition, is not certain. It seems, though in Saul's time the common interests of the kingdom were weak and low, some of the tribes that acted separately did well for themselves. We are here told, (1.) What a brave army these frontier tribes brought into the field against the Hagarites, forty-four thousand men and upwards, all strong and stout, and skilful in war; so many effective men, that knew how to manage their weapons, ver. 18. How much more considerable might Israel have been than they were in the time of the Judges, if all the tribes had acted in conjunction? (2.) What courage they took to engage God for them, they cried to God, and put their trust in him, ver. 20. Now they acted as Israelites indeed. (1.) As the seed of believing Abraham, they put their trust in God; though they had a powerful army, they relied not on that, but on the divine power. They depended on the commission they had from God to wage war with their neighbours for the enlarging of their coasts, if there was occasion, even with those that were very far off, besides the devoted nations: see Deut. xx. 15. They depended on God's providence to give them success. (2.) As the seed of praying Jacob, they cried unto God, especially in the battle, when, perhaps, at first they were in danger of being overpowered: see the like done, 2 Chron. xiii. 14. In distress God expects we should cry to him; disdains upon us for this tribute, this rent: in our spiritual conflicts we must look up to heaven for strength; and it is the believing prayer that will be the prevailing prayer. (3.) We are told what success they had. God was intreated of them, though need drove them to him, so ready is he to hear and answer prayer: They were helped against their enemies: for God never yet failed any that trusted in him. And then they routed the enemies army, though far superior in number to theirs, slew many, ver. 22. took one hundred thousand prisoners, enriched themselves greatly with the spoil, and settled themselves in their country, ver. 21, 22. And all this, because the war was of God, undertaken in his fear, and carried on in a dependence upon him. If the battle be the Lord's, there is reason to hope it will be successful. Then we may expect to prosper in any enterprise, and then only, when we take God along with us.

2. They shared, at length, in an inglorious captivity. Had they kept close to God and their duty, they had continued to enjoy both their ancient lot and their new conquests; but they transgressed against the God of their fathers, ver. 25. they lay upon the borders, and conversed most with the neighbour nations, by which means they learned their idolatrous usages, and transmitted the infection to the other tribes; for this God had a controversy with them: he was a husband to them, and no marvel his jealousy burnt like fire, when they went a whoring after other gods; justly is a bill of divorce given to the adulterers: God stirred up the spirit of the kings of Assyria, first one, and then another against them, served his own purposes by the designs of those ambitious monarchs, employed them to chastise those revolvers first, and when that reduced them not, then wholly to root them out, ver. 26. These tribes were first placed, and they were first displaced. They would have the best land, not considering that it lay most exposed. But those who are governed more by sense than by reason of faith in their choices, may expect to fare accordingly.

C H A P. VI.

Though Joseph and Judah shared between them the forfeited honour of the birth-right, yet Levi was first, of all the tribes, dignified and distinguished with an honour more valuable than either the pre-eminence or the double portion, and that was the priesthood. That tribe God set apart for himself, it was Moses's tribe, and perhaps for his sake was thus favoured. Of that tribe we have an account in this chapter. (1.) Their pedigree; the first fathers of the tribe, ver. 1—3. The line of the priests from Aaron to the captivity, ver. 4—15. and of some other of their families, ver. 16—30. (2.) Their work; the work of the Levites, ver. 31—48. Of the priests, ver. 49—53. (3.) The cities appointed them in the land of Canaan, ver. 54—81.

1. THE sons of Levi; Gershom, Kohath, and Merari. 2. And the sons of Kohath; Amram, Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel. 3. And the children of Amram; Aaron, and Moses, and Miriam. The sons also of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. 4. ¶ Eleazar begat Phinehas, Phinehas begat Abishua, 5. And Abishua begat Bukki, and Bukki begat Uzzi. 6. And Uzzi begat Zerahiah, and Zerahiah begat Meraioth, 7. Meraioth begat Amariah, and Amariah begat Ahitub, 8. And Ahitub begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Ahimaaz. 9. And Ahimaaz begat Azariah, and Azariah begat Johanan, 10. And Johanan begat Azariah (he it is that executed the priest's office in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem:) 11. And Azariah begat Amariah, and Amariah begat Ahitub. 12. And Ahitub begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Shallum, 13. And Shallum begat Hilkiah, and Hilkiah begat Azariah, 14. And Azariah begat Seraiah, and Seraiah begat Jehozadak, 15. And Jehozadak went into captivity, when the LORD carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. 16. ¶ The sons of Levi; Gershom, Kohath, and Merari. 17. And these be the names of the sons of Gershom: Libni, and Shimei. 18. And the sons of Kohath were, Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel. 19. The sons of Merari; Mahli, and Musi. And these are the families of the Levites according to their fathers. 20. Of Gershom; Libni his son, Joah his son, Zimmah his son. 21. Joah his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, Jeaterai his son. 22. The sons of Kohath; Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Affir his son. 23. Elkanah his son, and Ebiasaph his son, and Affir his son. 24. Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uzziel his son, and Shaul his son. 25. And the sons of Elkanah, Amasai, and Ahimoth. 26. As for Elkanah; the sons of Elkanah; Zophai his son, and Nahath his son. 27. Eliab his son, Jeroham his son, Elkanah his son. 28. And the sons of Samuel; the first-born Vashni, and Abiah. 29. The sons of Merari; Mahli, and Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzza his son. 30. Shimei his son, Haggai his son, Asaiah his son.

The priests and Levites were more concerned than any other Israelites to preserve their pedigree clear, and to be able to prove it; because all the honour and privileges of their office depended upon their descent: and we read of those, who though perhaps they really were children of the priests, yet because they could not find the register of their genealogies, nor make out their descent by any authentic record, they were, as polluted, put from the priesthood, and forbidden to eat of the holy things, Ezra ii. 62, 63.

It is but very little that is here recorded of the genealogies of this sacred tribe.

1. The first fathers of it are here named twice, ver. 1—16. Gershom, Kohath, and Merari, were three names we were very conversant with in the book of Numbers, when the families of the Levites were marshalled, and had their work assigned them. Aaron, and Moses, and Miriam, we have known much more of than their names, and cannot pass them over here without remembering, that this was that Moses and Aaron whom God honoured in making them instruments of Israel's deliverance, and settlement, and figures of him that was to come; Moses as a prophet, and Aaron as a priest. And the mention of Nadab and Abihu here, (though having no children, there was no occasion to bring them into the genealogy) cannot but mind us of the terrors of that divine justice which they were made monuments of for offering strange fire, that we may always fear before him.

2. The line of Eleazar, the successor of Aaron, is here drawn down to the time of the captivity, ver. 4—15. It begins with Eleazar, who came out of the house of bondage in Egypt, and ends with Jehozadak, who went into the house of bondage in Babylon. Thus, for their sins, they were left as they were found: which might also intimate that the Levitical priesthood made nothing perfect; that was to be done by the bringing in of a better hope. All these here named were not high priests; for in the time of the Judges that dignity was, upon some occasion or other, brought into the family of Ithamar, of which Eli was; but in Zadok returned again to the right line. Of Azariah it is here said, ver. 10. He it is that executeth the priest's office in the temple that Solomon built. It is supposed this was that Azariah who bravely opposeth the presumption of king Uzziah when he invaded the priest's office, 2 Chron. xxvi. 17. though he ventured his neck by it: This was done like a priest, like one that was truly zealous for his God: he that thus boldly maintained and defended the priest's office, and made good its barriers

barriers against such a daring insult, may well be said to execute it; and this honour is put upon him for it; while Urijah, one of his successors, for a base compliance with king Ahaz in building him an idolatrous altar, has the disgrace put upon him of being left out of this genealogy; as perhaps some others are. But some think that this remark upon this Azariah should have been added to his grandfather of the same name, *ver.* 9. who was the son of Ahimaaz; and that that was he who first officiated in Solomon's temple.

3. Some other of the families of the Levites are here accounted for. One of the families of Gershon, *viz.* that of Libni, is here drawn down as far as Samuel, who had the honour of a prophet added to that of a Levite. One of the families of Merari, *viz.* that of Mahli, is likewise drawn down for some descents, *ver.* 29, 30.

31. And these *are they* whom David set over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after that the ark had rest. 32. And they ministered before the dwelling place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem: and *then* they waited on their office according to their order. 33. And these *are they* that waited with their children: of the sons of the Kohathites; Heman a singer, the son of Joel, the son of Shemuel, 34. The son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Eliel, the son of Toah, 35. The son of Zuph, the son of Elkanah, the son of Mahath, the son of Amasai. 36. The son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah, 37. The son of Tahath, the son of Assir, the son of Abiaph, the son of Korah, 38. The son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel. 39. And his brother Afaph (who stood on his right hand) *even* Afaph the son of Berechiah, the son of Shimea, 40. The son of Michael, the son of Baaseiah, the son of Malchiah, 41. The son of Ethni, the son of Zerah, the son of Adaijah, 42. The son of Ethan, the son of Zimmah, the son of Shimei, 43. The son of Jahath, the son of Gershon, the son of Levi. 44. And their brethren the sons of Merari *stood* on the left hand: Ethan, the son of Kishi, the son of Abdi, the son of Malluch, 45. The son of Hashabiah, the son of Amaziah, the son of Hilkiyah, 46. The son of Amzi, the son of Bani, the son of Shamer, 47. The son of Mahli, the son of Mushi, the son of Merari, the son of Levi. 48. Their brethren also the Levites *were* appointed unto all manner of service of the tabernacle of the house of God. 49. ¶ But Aaron and his sons offered upon the altar of the burnt-offering, and on the altar of incense, *and were appointed* for all the work of the *place* most holy, and to make an atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded. 50. And these *are* the sons of Aaron; Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son, 51. Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son, 52. Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son, 53. Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son.

When the Levites were first ordained in the wilderness, much of the work, then appointed them, lay in carrying and taking care of the tabernacle, and the utensils of it, while they were in their march through the wilderness. In David's time their number was increased; and though the greater part of them was dispersed all the nations over, to teach the people of the good knowledge of the Lord; yet of those that attended the house of God, there was not constant work for them all; and therefore David, by special commission and direction from God, new modelled the Levites, as we shall find in the latter part of this book. Here we are told what the work was which he assigned them.

1. Singing work, *ver.* 3. David was raised up on high to be the sweet psalmist of Israel, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1. not only to pen psalms, but to appoint the singing of them in the house of the Lord, (not so much because he was musical, as because he was devout) and this he did *after that the ark had rest*: while that was in captivity, obscurity, and unsettled, the harps were hung upon the willow-trees, singing was then thought unreasonable; when the bridegroom is taken away, they shall fast: but the harps being resumed, and the songs revived at the *bringing up of the ark*, they were continued afterwards; for we should rejoice as much in the prolonging of our spiritual privileges, as in the restoring of them. When the service of the ark was very much superseded by its rest, they had other work cut out for them (for Levites should never be idle) and were employed in the service of song. Thus when the people of God come to the rest which remains for them above, they shall take leave of all their burdens, and be employed in everlasting songs. These singers kept up that service in the tabernacle, till the temple was built, and then they *waited on their office there*, *ver.* 32. When they came to that stately magnificent house, they kept as close both to their office, and to their order, as they had done in the tabernacle. It is pity the preferment of the Levites should ever make them remiss in their business.

We have here an account of the three great masters who were employed in the service of the sacred song, each with their respective families; for they *waited with their children*, i. e. such as descended from them, or were allied to them, *ver.* 33. Heman, Afaph, and Ethan, were the three that were appointed to this service; one of each of the three houses of the Levites, that there might be an equality in the distribution of this work and honour, and each knew his post; such an admirable order was there in this choir service.

(1.) Of the house of Kohath was Heman and his family; *ver.* 33. a man of sorrowful spirit, if it be the same Heman that penned the eighty-eighth psalm, and yet a singer. He was the grandson of Samuel the prophet, the son of Joel, of whom it is said, that *he walked not in the ways of Samuel*, 1 Sam. viii. 2, 3. but it seems, though the son did not, the grandson did: thus doth the blessing entailed on the seed of the upright sometimes skip over

one generation, and fasten upon the next. And this Heman, though the grandson of that mighty prince, did not think it below him to be precursor in the house of God; David himself was willing to have been a door-keeper. Rather we may look upon this preferment of the grandson in the church, as recompence for the humble modest resignation which the grandfather made of his authority in the state. Many such ways God has of making up his people's losses, and balancing their disgraces. Perhaps David, in making Heman the chief, had some respect to his old friend Samuel.

(2.) Of the house of Gershon was Afaph, called his brother, because in the same office, and of the same tribe, though of another family: he was posted on Heman's right hand in the choir, *ver.* 39. Several of the psalms bear his name, either penned, or tuned by him, as the chief musician. It is plain he was the penman of some psalms; for we read of those that praised the Lord in the words of David and of Afaph; for he was a *seer*, as well as a singer, 2 Chron. xxix. 30. His pedigree is run up here through names utterly unknown, as high as Levi, *ver.* 39—43.

(3.) Of the house of Merari was Ethan, *ver.* 44. who was appointed to Heman's left hand. His pedigree is also run up to Levi, *ver.* 47. If these were the Heman and Ethan that penned the eighty-eighth and eighty-ninth psalms, there appears no reason here why they should be called Ezrahites, as there doth why these should be called so who are mentioned, *chap.* ii. 6.

2. There was serving-work, abundance of services to be done *in the tabernacle of the house of God*, *ver.* 48. to provide water and fuel; to wash and sweep, and carry out ashes; to kill and slay, and boil the sacrifices; and to all such services there were Levites appointed, those of other families, or perhaps those that were not fit to be singers, that had either no good voice, or no good ear: *As every one has received the gift, so let him minister*. They that could not sing, must not therefore be laid aside as good for nothing; though they were not fit for that service, there was other service they might be useful in.

3. There was sacrificing work, and that was to be done by the priests only, *ver.* 49. They only were to sprinkle the blood, and burn the incense; and for the work of the *place* most holy, that was to be done by the high-priest only. Each had his work, and they both needed one another, and helped one another in it. Concerning the work of the priests, we are here told, (1.) What was the end they were to have in their eye; they were to *make an atonement for Israel*. To mediate between the people and God: not to magnify and enrich themselves, but to serve the public; they were *ordained for men*. (2.) What was the rule they were to have in their eye: they presided in God's house, yet must do as they were bidden, according to all that God commanded. That law the highest are subject to.

54. ¶ Now these *are* their dwelling-places throughout their castles in their coats, of the sons of Aaron, of the families of the Kohathites: for their's was the lot. 55. And they gave them Hebron in the land of Judah, and the suburbs thereof round about it. 56. But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh. 57. And to the sons of Aaron they gave the cities of Judah, *namely*, Hebron, the city of refuge, and Libnah, with her suburbs, and Jattir, and Elhtemoa, with their suburbs, 58. And Hilen with her suburbs, Debir with her suburbs, 59. And Ashan with her suburbs, and Beth-shemesh with her suburbs: 60. And out of the tribe of Benjamin: Geba with her suburbs, and Alemeth with her suburbs, and Anathoth with her suburbs. All the cities throughout their families *were* thirteen cities. 61. And unto the sons of Kohath, *which were* left of the family of that tribe, *were* cities given out of the half-tribe, *namely*, out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, by lot, ten cities. 62. And to the sons of Gershon throughout their families, out of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Aser, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities. 63. Unto the sons of Merari *were* given by lot, throughout their families, out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities. 64. And the children of Israel gave to the Levites *these* cities, with their suburbs. 65. And they gave by lot out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, and out of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, *these* cities, which are called by *their* names. 66. And the residue of the families of the sons of Kohath had cities of their coats out of the tribe of Ephraim. 67. And they gave unto them *of* the cities of refuge, Shechem in mount Ephraim, with her suburbs; *they gave* also Geser with her suburbs, 68. And Jokmeam with her suburbs, and Beth-horon with her suburbs, 69. And Aijalon with her suburbs, and Gath-rimmon with her suburbs: 70. And out of the half-tribe of Manasseh; Aner with her suburbs, and Bileam with her suburbs, for the family of the remnant of the sons of Kohath. 71. Unto the sons of Gershon *were* given out of the family of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Golan in Bashan, with her suburbs, and Ashtaroth with her suburbs: 72. And out of the tribe of Issachar; Kedesh with her suburbs, Daberath with her suburbs, 73. And Ramoth with her suburbs, and Anem with her suburbs: 74. And out of the tribe of Aser; Mashal with her suburbs, and Abdon with her suburbs, 75. And Hukok with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs: 76. And out of the tribe of Naphtali; Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, and Hammon with her suburbs, and Kirjathaim with her suburbs. 77. Unto the rest of the children

children of Merari were given out of the tribe of Zebulun, Rimmon with her suburbs, Tabor with her suburbs: 78. And on the other side Jordan by Jericho, on the east side of Jordan were given them out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer in the wilderness with her suburbs, and Jahzah with her suburbs, 79. Kedemoth also with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs: 80. And out of the tribe of Gad; Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs, and Mahanaim with her suburbs, 81. And Heeshbon with her suburbs, and Jazer with her suburbs.

We have here an account of the Levites cities; their castles they are here called, *ver.* 54. not only because walled and fortified, and well guarded by the country, for it is the interest of any nation to protect their ministers; but because they and their possessions were, in a particular manner, the care of the divine providence: As God was their portion, so God was their protection: and a cottage will be a castle to those that abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

This account is much the same with that which we had, *Josh.* xxi. We need not be critical in comparing them; what good will it do us? nor will it do any hurt to the credit of the holy scripture, if the names of some of the places be not just the same here, that they were there. We know it is common for cities to have several names; Salum and Salisbury, Salop and Shrewsbury, are more unlike than Helem, *vii.* 35. and Holon, *Josh.* xxi. 15. Ahan, *ver.* 59. and Ain, *Josh.* xxi. 16. Alemeth and Almon, *Josh.* xxi. 18. and time changeth names.

We are only to observe, that in this appointment of cities for the Levites, God takes care, (1.) For the accomplishment of dying Jacob's prediction concerning this tribe, that it should be scattered in Israel, *Gen.* xlix. 7. (2.) For the diffusing of the knowledge of himself and his law to all parts of the land of Israel: every tribe had Levites cities in it, and so every room was furnished with a candle, so that none could be ignorant of his duty; but it was either his own fault, or the Levites. (2.) For a comfortable maintenance for those that ministered in holy things. Besides their tithes and offerings, they had glebe lands, and cities of their own to dwell in. Some of the most considerable cities of Israel fell to the Levites lot. Every tribe had benefit by the Levites, and therefore every tribe must contribute to their support. Let him that is taught in the word, communicate to him that teacheth him, and do it cheerfully.

C H A P. VII.

In this chapter we have some account of the genealogies (1.) Of Issachar, *ver.* 1—5. (2.) Of Benjamin, *ver.* 6—12. (3.) Of Naphtali, *ver.* 13. (4.) Of Manasseh, *ver.* 14—19. (5.) Of Ephraim, *ver.* 20—29. (6.) Of Aher, *ver.* 30—40. Here is no account either of Zebulun or Dan. Why they only should be omitted, we can assign no reason; only it is the disgrace of the tribe of Dan, that idolatry began in that colony of the Danites which planted in Laish, and called it Dan, and there one of the golden calves was set up by Jeroboam. Dan is omitted, *Rev.* vii.

1. **N**OW the sons of Issachar were, Tola, and Puah, Jashub, and Shimrom, four. 2. And the sons of Tola; Uzzi, and Rephaiah, and Jeriel, and Jahmai, and Jibsam, and Shemucl, heads of their father's house, to wit, of Tola: they were valiant men of might in their generations, whole number was in the days of David two and twenty thousand and six hundred. 3. And the sons of Uzzi; Izrahiah: and the sons of Izrahiah; Michael, and Obadiah, and Joel, Ithai, five: all of them chief men. 4. And with them, by their generations, after the house of their fathers, were bands of soldiers for war, six and thirty thousand men: for they had many wives and sons. 5. And their brethren among all the families of Issachar were valiant men of might, reckoned in all by their genealogies, fourscore and seven thousand. 6. ¶ The sons of Benjamin; Bela, and Becher, and Jediael, three. 7. And the sons of Bela; Ezbon, and Uzzi, and Uzziel, and Jerimoth, and Iri, five; heads of the house of their fathers, mighty men of valour, and were reckoned by their genealogies, twenty and two thousand and thirty and four. 8. And the sons of Becher; Zemira, and Joash, and Eliezer, and Elieonai, and Omri, and Jerimoth, and Abiah, and Anathoth, and Alameth, All these are the sons of Becher. 9. And the number of them, after their genealogy by their generations, heads of the houses of their fathers, mighty men of valour, was twenty thousand and two hundred. 10. The sons also of Jediael; Bilhan: and the sons of Bilhan; Jeush, and Benjamin, and Ehud, and Chenaanah, and Zethan, and Tharshish, and Ahishahar, 11. All these the sons of Jediael, by the heads of their fathers, mighty men of valour, were seventeen thousand and two hundred soldiers, fit to go out for war and battle. 12. Shuppim also, and Huphim, the children of Ir, and Hushim, the sons of Aher. 13. ¶ The sons of Naphtali; Jahziel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shallum the sons of Bilhah. 14. ¶ The sons of Manasseh; Ashriel, whom the bare: (but his concubine the Aramites bare Machir the father of Gilead: 15. And Machir took to wife the sister of Huphim and Shuppim, whose sister's name was Maachah) and the name of the second was Zelophehad: and Zelophehad had daughters. 16. And Maachah the wife of Machir bare a son, and she called his name Peresh;

and the name of his brother was Shereph: and his sons were Ulam, and Rakem. 17. And the sons of Ulam; Bedan. These were the sons of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh. 18. And his sister Hammoleketh bare Ishod, and Abiezer, and Mahalah. 19. And the sons of Shemidah were, Ahian, and Shechem, and Likhi, and Aniham.

We have here a short view given us,

1. Of the tribe of Issachar, whom Jacob had comparing to a strong ass couching between two burdens, *Gen.* xlix. 14. an industrious tribe, that minded their country business very close, and rejoiced in their tents, *Deut.* xxxiii. 18. and here it appears, (1.) That they were a numerous tribe, for they had many wives: so fruitful their country was, that they saw no danger of overstocking the pasture: and so ingenious the people were, that they could find work for all hands. Let no people complain of their numbers provided they suffer none to be idle. (2.) That they were a valiant tribe; men of might, *ver.* 2—5. chief men, *ver.* 3. They that were inured to labour and business were of all others the fittest to serve their country when there was occasion. The numbers of the respective families, as taken in the days of David, are here set down, amounting in the whole to above one hundred forty-five thousand men fit for war. The account is supposed to be taken when Joab numbered the people, 2 *Sam.* xxiv. but I rather think it refers to some other computation that was made perhaps among themselves; because it is said, 1 *Chron.* xxvii. 25. that that account was not inserted into the chronicles of king David, it having offended God.

2. Of the tribe of Benjamin; some account is given of this tribe here, but a much larger in the next chapter. The militia of this tribe scarce reaches to sixty thousand, but they are said to be mighty men of valour, *ver.* 7, 9, 11. Benjamin shall raven as a wolf, *Gen.* xlix. 27. It was the honour of this tribe, that produced Saul the first king; and more its honour that it adhered to the rightful kings of the house of David, when the other tribes revolted.

Here is mention, *ver.* 12. of Hushim the sons of Aher. The sons of Dan are said to be Hushim, *Gen.* xlii. 23. and therefore some read Aher appellatively, Hushim the sons of another; i. e. another of Jacob's sons; or the sons of a stranger, other than an Israelite should be; for so the Danites were, when they set up Michah's graven and molten image among them.

3. Of the tribe of Naphtali, *ver.* 13. The first fathers of that tribe are only named; the very same that we find, *Gen.* xlii. 21. only that Shilleth there, is Shallum here. None of their descendants are named; perhaps because their genealogies were lost.

4. Of the tribe of Manasseh, that part of it which was seated within Jordan; for of the other part we had some account before, *chap.* v. 23. Of this tribe, observe, (1.) That one of them married an Aramite, i. e. a Syrian, *ver.* 14. This was during their bondage in Egypt; so early did they begin to mingle themselves with the nations. (2.) That though the father married a Syrian, Machir, the son of that marriage, perhaps seeing the inconvenience of it in his father's house, took to wife a daughter of Benjamin, *ver.* 15. It is good for the children to take warning by their fathers mistakes, and not stumble at the same stone. (3.) Here is mention of Bedan, *ver.* 17. who perhaps is the same with that Bedan who is mentioned as one of Israel's deliverers, 1 *Sam.* xii. 11. Jair, perhaps, who was of Manasseh, *Judges.* x. 3. was the man.

20. ¶ And the sons of Ephraim; Shuthelah, and Be-
red his son, and Tahath his son, and Eladah his son, and
Tahath his son, 21. ¶ And Zabud his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer and Elead, whom the men of Gath that were born in that land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. 22. And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him. 23. ¶ And when he went in to his wife, she conceived and bare a son, and he called his name Beriah, because it went evil with his house. 24. (And his daughter was Sherah, who built Beth-horon the nether, and the upper, and Uzzen-sherah.) 25. And Rephah was his son, also Resheph, and Telah his son, and Tahan his son, 26. Ladan his son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son, 27. Non his son, Jehoshuah his son. 28. ¶ And their possessions and habitations were, Bethel, and the towns thereof, and eastward Naaran, and westward Gizer, with the towns thereof; Shechem also and the towns thereof, unto Gaza and the towns thereof: 29. And by the borders of the children of Manasseh, Beth-shean and her towns, Taanach and her towns, Megiddo and her towns, Dor and her towns. In these dwelt the children of Joseph the son of Israel. 30. ¶ The sons of Aher; Imnah, and Isuah, and Ithuai, and Beriah, and Serah their sister. 31. And the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel, who is the father of Birzavith, 32. And Heber begat Japhlet, and Shomer, and Hotham, and Shua their sister. 33. And the sons of Japhlet; Pasach, and Bimhal, and Ahvath: these are the children of Japhlet. 34. And the sons of Shamer; Ahi, and Rohgah, Jehubbah, and Aram. 35. And the sons of his brother Helem; Zophah, and Imnah, and Shelesh, and Amal. 36. The sons of Zophah; Suah, and Harnepher, and Shual, and Beri, and Imrah, 37. Bezer, and Hod, and Shamma, and Shilshah, and Ithran, and Becra. 38. And the sons of Jether; Jephunneh, and Pispah, and Ara. 39. And the sons of Ullah; Arah, and Haniel, and Rezia. 40. All these were the children of Aher, heads of their father's house, choice, and mighty men of valour, chief of the princes. And the number throughout the genealogy of them, that were apt to the war, and to battle, was twenty-and six thousand men.

We have here an account,

1. Of the tribe of Ephraim. Great things we read of that tribe, when it came to maturity: Here we have an account of the disasters of its infancy, while it was in Egypt, as it should seem, for Ephraim himself was alive when those things were done, which yet is hard to imagine: if it were, as is here computed, seven generations off. Therefore I am apt to think, either it was another Ephraim, or that those who were slain were the immediate sons of that Ephraim that was the son of Joseph. In this passage, which is here only related, we have,

(1.) The great breach that was made upon the family of Ephraim. The men of Gath, Philistines, giants, slew many of the sons of that family, because they came down to take away their cattle, ver. 21. It is uncertain who were the aggressors here. 1. Some make the men of Gath the aggressors, men born in the land of Egypt, but now resident in Gath; that they came down into the land of Goshen to drive away the Ephraimites cattle, and slew the owners, because they stood in the defence of them. Many a man's life has been exposed and betrayed by his wealth; so far is it from being a strong city. 2. Others think the Ephraimites made a descent upon the men of Gath to plunder them, presuming that the time was come when they should be put in possession of Canaan; but they paid dear for their rashness and precipitation. They that will not wait God's time, cannot expect God's blessing. I rather think the men of Gath came down upon the Ephraimites, because the Israelites in Egypt were shepherds, not soldiers; abounded in cattle of their own, and therefore not likely to venture their lives for their neighbour's cattle: and the words may be read, *the men of Gath slew them*, for they came down to take away their cattle. Zabab the son of Ephraim, and Shuthelah, and Ezar, and Elead, his grand-children, were the men that were slain; as Dr. Lightfoot thinks. Jacob had foretold, that the seed of Ephraim should become a multitude of nations, Gen. xlviii. 19. and yet that plant is thus nipped in the bud. God's providence often seems to contradict his promises; but when they do so they really magnify the promise, and make the performance of it notwithstanding so much the more illustrious. The Ephraimites were the posterity of Joseph, and yet his power could not protect them, though some think he was yet living. The sword devours one as well as another.

(2.) The great grief which oppressed the father of the family hereupon. Ephraim mourned many days: Nothing brings gray hairs to the grave with more sorrow, than their following the green blades that descend from them to the grave first; especially if in blood. It is often the burden of those that live to be old, that they see those go before them of whom they said, *These shall comfort us*. It was a brotherly friendly office which his brethren did, when they came to comfort him under this great affliction, to express their sympathy with him, and concern with him, and to suggest that to him which would support and quiet him under this sad providence. Probably they reminded him of the promise of increase with which Jacob had blessed him, when he laid his right hand upon his head: although his house was not so with God as he hoped, but a house of mourning, a shattered family, yet that promise was sure, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

(3.) The repair of this breach, in some measure, by the addition of another son to his family in his old age, ver. 23. like Seth, another seed instead of that of Abel whom Cain slew, Gen. iv. 25. When God thus restores comfort to his mourners, makes glad according to the days wherein he afflicted, setting the mercies over-against the crosses, we ought therein to take notice of the kindness and tenderness of the divine providence: it is as if it repeated God concerning his servants, Psal. xc. 12—15. Yet joy, that a man was born into his family, could not make him forget his grief; for he gives a melancholy name to this son, Beriah, *in trouble*; for he was born when the family was in mourning, when it went evil with his house. It is good to have in remembrance the affliction and the misery, the wormwood and the gall, that our souls may be humbled within us, Lam. iii. 19. What name more proper for man that is born of a woman, than Beriah, because born into a troublesome world. It is added, as a farther honour to the house of Ephraim, (1.) That a daughter of that tribe, Sherah by name, at the time of Israel's settling in Canaan, built some cities, either at her own charge, or by her own care: One of them bore her name, Uzzan-Sherah, ver. 24. A virtuous woman may be as great an honour and blessing to a family as a mighty man. (2.) That a son of that tribe was employed in the conquest of Canaan, Jerubbaal the son of Non, ver. 27. In this also the breach made on Ephraim's family was further repaired; and perhaps the resentments of this injury formerly done by the Canaanites to the Ephraimites, might make him more vigorous in the war.

2. Of the tribe of Asher. Some men of note of that tribe are here named: their militia was not numerous, in comparison with some other tribes, only twenty-six thousand men, in all; but their princes were choice and mighty men of valour, chief of the princes, ver. 40. and perhaps it was their wisdom that they coveted not to make their trained bands numerous, but rather to have a few, and those apt to the war, and serviceable men.

CHAP. VIII.

We had some account given us of Benjamin in the foregoing chapter; here we have a larger catalogue of the great men of that tribe; (1.) Because of that tribe Saul came, the first king of Israel, to the story of whom he is hastening, chap. x. 1. (2.) Because that tribe clave to Judah, inhabited much of Jerusalem, was one of the two tribes that went into captivity, and returned back; and that story also he had an eye to, chap. ix. 1. Here is, 1. Some of the heads of that tribe named, ver. 1—32. 2. A more particular account of the family of Saul, ver. 33—40.

1. NOW Benjamin begat Bela his first-born, Ashbel the second, and Aharah the third, 2. Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth. 3. And the sons of Bela were, Addar, and Gera, and Abihud. 4. And Abihua, and Naaman, and Ahoah, 5. And Gera, and Shephuphan, and Hiram. 6. And these are the sons of Ehud: these are heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Geba, and they removed them to Manahath: 7. And Naaman, and Ahiah, and Gera, he removed them, and begat Uzza, and Abihud. 8. And Shaha-ram begat children in the country of Moab, after he had sent them away; Hushim and Baara were his wives. 9. And he begat of Hodesh his wife, Jobab, and Zibia, and Mesha, and Malcham, 10. And Jeuz, and Shachia, and Mirma. These were his sons, heads of the fathers.

11. And of Hushim he begat Abitub, and Elpaal. 12. The sons of Elpaal; Eber, and Milham, and Shamed who built Ono, and Lod with the towns thereof: 13. Beriah also, and Shema, who were heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Aijalon, who drove away the inhabitants of Gath: 14. And Ahio, Shashak, and Jeremoth, 15. And Zebadiah, and Arad, and Ader. 16. And Michael, and Issach, and Joha, the sons of Beriah; 17. And Zebadiah, and Melhullam, and Hezeki, and Heber, 18. Ishmerai also, and Jeziah, and Jobab, the sons of Elpaal; 19. And Jakim, and Zichri, and Zabdi, 20. And Eliehai, and Zillhai, and Eliel, 21. And Adaiah, and Beraiah, and Shimirath, the sons of Shimi: 22. And Ishpan, and Heber, and Eliel, 23. And Abdon, and Zichri, and Hanan, 24. And Hana-niah, and Elam, and Antothijah, 25. And Iphedeah, and Penuel the sons of Shashak; 26. And Shamshe-rah, and Shehariah, and Athaliah, 27. And Jareiah, and Eliah, and Zichri, the sons of Jeroham, 28. These were heads of the fathers, by their generations, chief men. These dwelt in Jerusalem. 29. And at Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon, (whose wife's name was Maachah) 30. And his first-born son Abdon, and Zur, and Kih, and Baal, and Nadab, 31. And Gedor, and Ahio, and Zacher. 32. And Mikloth begat Shimea. And these also dwelt with their brethren in Jerusalem over against them.

There is little or nothing of history that occurs in all these verses; we have not therefore much to observe.

1. As to the difficulties that occur in this and the foregoing genealogies, we need not perplex ourselves: I presume Ezra took them as he found them in the books of the kings of Israel and Judah, chap. ix. 1. according as they were given in by the several tribes, each observing what method they thought fit. Hence some ascend, others descend; some have numbers added, others places; some have historical remarks intermixed, others have not; some are shorter, others longer; some agree with other records, others differ; some it is likely, were torn, razed and blotted, others more legible. Those of Dan and Reuben were entirely lost. This holy man wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost; but there was no necessity for the making up of the defects, no, nor for the rectifying of the mistakes of these genealogies by inspiration: it was sufficient that he copied them out as they came to his hand, or so much of them as was requisite to the present purpose, which was the directing of the returned captives to settle, as near as they could, with those of their own family, and in the places of their former residence. We may suppose many things in these genealogies which to us seem intricate, abrupt, and perplexed, were plain and easy to them then, who knew how to fill up the deficiencies, and abundantly answered the intention of the publishing of them.

2. Many great and mighty nations there were now in being upon earth, and many illustrious men in them, whose names are buried in perpetual oblivion, while the names of multitudes of the Israel of God are here carefully preserved in everlasting remembrance. They are Jasher, Jethurun, just ones, and the memory of the just is blessed. Many of these, we have reason to fear, came short of everlasting honour (for even the wicked kings of Judah came into the genealogy) yet the perpetuating of their names here was a figure of the writing of the names of all God's spiritual Israel in the Lamb's book of life.

3. This tribe of Benjamin was once brought to a very low ebb in the time of the judges, upon the occasion of the iniquity of Gibeon, when only six hundred men escaped the sword of justice; and yet, in these genealogies, it makes as good a figure as almost any other of the tribes: for it is the honour of God to help the weakest, and raise up those that are most diminished and abased.

4. Here is mention of one Ehud, ver. 6. in the verse before of one Gera, ver. 4. and ver. 8. of one that descended from him that begat children in the country of Moab; which inclines me to think it was that Ehud who was the second of the judges of Israel: for it is said, he was the son of Gera, and a Benjamite, Judges iii. 15. and he delivered Israel from the oppression of the Moabites, by killing the king of Moab, which might give him a greater sway in the country of Moab than we find evidence of in his history, and might occasion some of his posterity to settle there.

5. Here is mention of some of the Benjamites that drove away the inhabitants of Gath, ver. 13. Perhaps those that had slain the Ephraimites, chap. vii. 21. or their posterity, by way of reprisal: and one of them that did this piece of justice was named Beriah too, that name in which the memorial of that injury was preserved.

6. Particular notice is taken of them that dwelt in Jerusalem, ver. 28. and again, ver. 32. that they whose ancestors had had their residence there might thereby be induced, at their return from captivity, to settle there too; which, for ought appears, few were willing to do, because it was the post of danger: and therefore we find, Neh. xi. 2. *The people blessed those that willingly offered themselves to dwell in Jerusalem*, most inclining to the cities of Judah rather. Those whose godly parents had their conversation in the New Jerusalem, should thereby be engaged to set their faces thitherward, and pursue the way thither, whatever it cost them.

33 ¶ And Ner begat Kish, and Kish begat Saul, and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchi-shua, and Abinadab, and Eshbaal. 34. And the son of Jonathan was Merib-baal; and Merib-baal begat Micah. 35. And the sons of Micah were, Pithon, and Melech, and Tarea, and Ahaz. 36. And Ahaz begat Jehoadah, and Jehoadah begat Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begat Moza. 37. And Moza begat Binea: Rapha was his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son: 38. And Azel had six sons whose names are these, Azrikam, Bocheru, and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadiah, and Hanan. All these were the sons of Azel. 39. And the sons of Eshek his brother were Ulam

Ulam his first-born, Jehush, the second, and Eliphelet the third. 40. And the sons of Ulam were mighty men of valour, archers, and had many sons, and sons' sons an hundred and fifty. All these are of the sons of Benjamin.

It is observable that among all the genealogies of the tribes, there is no mention of any of the kings of Israel after their defection from the house of David, much less of their families; not a word of Jeroboam's house, or Baasha's, of Omri's, or Jehu's; for they were all idolaters: But the family of Saul, which was the royal family before the elevation of David, we have here a particular account of.

1. Before Saul, Kish and Ner only are named, his father and grandfather, ver. 33. His pedigree is carried higher, 1 Sam. ix. 1. only there Kish is said to be the son of Abiel, here of Ner: he was, in truth, the son of Ner, but the grandson of Abiel, as appears by 1 Sam. xiv. 51. where it is said, that *Ner was the son of Abiel*: and that Abner, who was the son of Ner, was Saul's uncle, i. e. his father's brother; therefore his father was also the son of Ner. It is common in all languages, to put sons for grandsons, and other descendants; much more in the scanty language of the Hebrew.

2. After Saul, divers of his sons are named, but the posterity of none of them, save Jonathan only, who was blessed with a numerous issue, and those honoured with a place in the sacred genealogies, for the sake of his sincere kindness to David. The line of Jonathan is drawn down here for about ten generations; perhaps David was in a particular manner careful to preserve that, and assigned it a page by itself, because of the covenant made between his seed and Jonathan's seed for ever, 1 Sam. xx. 15, 23, 42. This genealogy ends in Ulam, whose family became famous in the tribe of Benjamin for the number of its valiant men. Of that one man's posterity there were, as it should seem at one time, one hundred and fifty archers brought into the field of battle, that were *mighty men of valour*, ver. 40. That is taken notice of concerning them, which is more a man's praise than his pomp or wealth is, that they were qualified to serve their country.

C H A P. IX.

This chapter intimates to us, that one end of recording all these genealogies was, to direct the Jews, now they were returned out of captivity, with whom to incorporate, and where to reside: for here we have an account of those who first took possession of Jerusalem after their return from Babylon, and began the rebuilding of it upon the old foundation. (1.) The Israelites, ver. 2—9. (2.) The priests, ver. 10—13. (3.) The Levites and other Nethinims. (4.) Here is the particular charge of some of the priests and Levites, ver. 27—34. (5.) A repetition of the genealogy of king Saul, ver. 35—44.

1. **S**O all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and, behold, they were written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, who were carried away to Babylon for their transgression. 2. ¶ Now the first inhabitants that dwell in their possessions in their cities were, the Israelites, the priests, Levites, and the Nethinims. 3. And in Jerusalem dwelt of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim, and Manasseh: 4. Uthai the son of Ammihud, the son of Omri, the son of Imri, the son of Bani, of the children of Pharez the son of Judah. 5. And of the Shilonites; Asaiah the first-born, and his sons. 6. And of the sons of Zerah; Jeuel, and their brethren, six hundred and ninety. 7. And of the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Hodaviah, the son of Hafenuah. 8. And Ibneiah the son of Jeroham, and Elah the son of Uzzi, the son of Michri, and Meshullam the son of Shephathiah, the son Reuel, the son of Ibniyah. 9. And their brethren, according to their generations, nine hundred and fifty and six. All these men were chief of the fathers in the house of their fathers. 10. ¶ And of the priests; Jedaiah, and Jehoiarib, and Jachin, 11. And Azariah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the ruler of the house of God. 12. And Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchijah, and Maasai the son of Adiel, the son of Jahzerah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshillemith, the son of Immer; 13. And their brethren, heads of the house of their fathers, a thousand and seven hundred and threescore; very able men for the work of the service of the house of God.

The first verse looks back upon the foregoing genealogies, and tells us, they were gathered out of the books of the kings of Israel and Judah; not that which we have that is so called in the canon of scripture, but another civil record, which was authentic, as the king's books with us. Mentioning Israel and Judah, he takes notice of their being carried away to Babylon for their transgression. Let that judgment never be forgotten, but ever be remembered for warning to posterity, to take heed of those sins that brought it upon them. Whenever we speak of any calamity that befall us, it is good to add this, It was for my transgression, that God may be justified, and clear when he judgeth.

Then follows an account of the first inhabitants after their return from captivity, that dwell in their cities, especially in Jerusalem.

1. The Israelites. That general name is used, ver. 2. because, with those of Judah and Benjamin, there were many of Ephraim and Manasseh, and other of the ten tribes, ver. 3. such as had escaped to Judah, when the body of the ten tribes were carried captive, or returned to Judah upon the revolutions in Assyria, and so went into captivity with them, or met them when they were in Babylon, associated with them, and so shared in the

benefit of their enlargement. It was foretold, that the children of Israel gathered together, and came up out of the land, Hof. i. 11. and that they should be one nation again, Ezek. xxxvii. 22. Trouble drives those together that have been at variance; and the pieces of metal that had been separated, when melted in the same crucible, will run together again. Many both of Judah and Israel, stayed behind in captivity; but some of both, whose spirits God stirred up, inquired the way to Zion again. Divers are here named, and many more numbered that were chief of the fathers, ver. 9. we ought to be remembered with honour, as Israelites indeed.

2. The priests, ver. 10. It was their praise that they came with the first. Who should lead in a good word, if the priests, the Lord's ministers, do not? It was the people's praise that would not come without them: for who, but they, should keep knowledge? who, but they, should bless them in the name of the Lord?

(1.) It is said of one of them, that he was *the ruler of the house of God*, ver. 11. not the chief ruler, for Joshua was then the high priest, but the Sagan the next under him, his deputy; and who, perhaps, applied himself more to the business than the high-priest himself. In the house of God it is requisite there be rulers, not to make new laws, but to take care that the laws of God be duly observed by priests as well as people.

(2.) It is said of many of them, they were *very able men for the service of the house of God*, ver. 13. In the house of God there is service to be done, constant service; and it is well for the church when those are employed in that service who are able for it; *able ministers of the new testament*, 2 Cor. iii. 6. The service of the temple was such as required at all times, especially in this critical juncture when they were newly come out of Babylon, great courage and vigour of mind, as well as strength of body; and therefore they are praised as *mighty men of valour*.

14. And of the Levites; Shemaiah the son of Hasub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, of the sons of Merari. 15. And Bakbakkar, Hereth, and Galal, and Mattaniah the son of Micah, the son of Zichri, the son of Asaph, 16. And Obadiah the son of Shemaiah, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun, and Berechiah the son of Asa, the son of Elkanah, that dwelt in the villages of the Nethophathites. 17. And the porters were, Shallum, and Akkub, and Talmon, and Ahiman, and their brethren: Shallum was the chief. 18. (Who hitherto waited in the king's gate eastward) They were porters in the companies of the children of Levi. 19. And Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his brethren: (of the house of his father) the Korathites were over the work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle: and their fathers being over the house of the LORD, were keepers of the entry. 20. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar was the ruler over them in time past, and the LORD was with him. 21. And Zechariah the son of Meshelemiah, was porter of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. 22. All these which were chosen to be porters of the gates, were two hundred and twelve. These were reckoned by their genealogy in their villages: whom David and Samuel the seer did ordain in their set office. 23. So they and their children had the oversight of the gates of the house of the LORD, namely the house of the tabernacle, by wards. 24. In four quarters were the porters, toward the east, west, north, and south. 25. And their brethren, which were in their villages, were to come after seven days from time to time with them. 26. For these Levites the four chief porters were in their set office, and were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God. 27. ¶ And they lodged round about the house of God, because the charge was upon them, and the opening thereof every morning pertained to them. 28. And certain of them had the charge of the ministering vessels, that they should bring them in and out by tale. 29. Some of them also were appointed to oversee the vessels, and all the instruments of the sanctuary, and the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices. 30. And some of the sons of the priests made the ointment of the spices. 31. And Mattithiah, one of the Levites (who was the first-born of Shallum the Korahite) had the set office over the things that were made in the pans. 32. And other of their brethren of the sons of the Kohathites were over the shew-bread to prepare it every sabbath. 33. And these are the fingers, chief of the fathers of the Levites, who remaining in the chambers were free: for they were employed in that work day and night. 34. These chief fathers of the Levites were chief throughout their generations that dwelt at Jerusalem.

We have here a farther account of the good posture which the affairs of religion were put into immediately upon their return out of Babylon. They had smarted for their former neglect of ordinances, and smarted under the late want of ordinances; and both these considerations made them very zealous and forward in setting up the worship of God among them; and so they began their work at the right end. Instances hereof we have here.

1. Before the house of the Lord was built they had the house of the tabernacle, a mean and moveable tent, which they made use of in the mean time. They that cannot yet reach to have a temple, must not be without a tabernacle; but be thankful for that, and make the best of it. Never let God's work be left undone for want of a place to do it in.

2. In allotting to the priests and Levites their respective employments, they

they had an eye to the model that was drawn up by David and Samuel the seer, ver. 22. Samuel in his time had drawn the scheme of it, and laid the foundation, though the ark was then in obscurity, and David afterwards finished it; and both by an immediate direction from God. Or David, as soon as he was anointed, had this matter in his head, and consulted Samuel about it, though he was then in his troubles, and the plan was formed in concert between them two. This, perhaps, had been little regarded for many ages; but now, after a long interruption, it is revived. In dividing the work, they observed these ancient land-marks.

3. The most of them dwelt at Jerusalem, ver. 34. yet there were some that dwelt in the villages, ver. 16, 22. because it may be, there was not, as yet, room for them in Jerusalem; but however they were employed in the service of the tabernacle, ver. 25. they were to come after seven days from time to time. They had their weeks of attendance in their turns.

4. Many of the Levites were employed as porters at the gates of the house of God; four chief porters, ver. 26. and under them to the number of two hundred and twelve, ver. 22. They had the oversight of the gates, ver. 23. were keepers of the threshold, as it is in the margin, ver. 19. and keepers of the entry. This seemed a mean office, and yet David would rather have it, than dwell in the tents of wickedness, Psal. lxxxiv. 10. Their office was, (1.) To open the doors of God's house every morning, ver. 27. and shut them at night. (2.) To keep off the unclean, and hinder those from thrusting in that were forbidden by the law. (3.) To direct and introduce into the courts of the Lord those that came thither to worship, to shew them whither to go, and what to do, that they might not run themselves into a premunire. This required care, and diligence, and constant attendance. Ministers have work to do of this kind.

5. Here is one Phinehas, a son of Eleazar that is said to be a ruler over them in time past, ver. 26. not the famous high-priest of that name, but (as is supposed) an eminent Levite, of whom it is here said, that the Lord was with him; or, as the Chaldee reads it, the word of the Lord was his helper; the eternal Word, who is Jehovah the mighty one, on whom help is laid.

6. It is said of some of them, that because the charge was upon them, they lodged round about the house of God, ver. 27. It is good for ministers to be near their work, that they may give themselves wholly to it. The Levites pitched about the tabernacle when they marched through the wilderness; then they were porters in one sense, bearing the burdens of the sanctuary; now porters in another sense, attending the gates and the doors; herein both keeping the charge of the sanctuary.

7. Every one knew his charge. Some were intrusted with the plate, the ministering vessels, to bring them in and out by tale, ver. 28. others were appointed to prepare the fine flour, wine, oil, &c. ver. 29. others, that were priests, made up the holy anointing oil, ver. 30. others took care of the meat-offerings, ver. 31. others of the shew-bread, ver. 42. As in other great houses, so in God's house, the work is likely to be done well, when every one knows the duty of his place, and makes a business of it. God is the God of order; but that which is every body's work will be no body's work.

8. The singers were employed in that work day and night, ver. 37. They were the chief fathers of the Levites that made a business of it, not mean singing-men, that made a trade of it. They remained in the chambers of the temple, that they might closely and constantly attend it; and were therefore discharged from all other services. It should seem, some companions or other were continually singing, at least at stated hours, both day and night. Thus was God continually praised, as it is fit he should be, who is continually doing good: thus devout people might at any hour have assistance in their devotion. Thus was the temple a figure of the heavenly one, where they rest not day nor night from praising God, Rev. iv. 8. *Blessed are they that dwell in thine house, they will be still praising thee.*

35. ¶ And in Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon, Jechiel, whose wife's name was Maachah: 36. And his first-born son Abdon, then Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Ner, and Nadab, 37. And Gedor, and Ahio, and Zechariah, and Mikloth. 38. And Mikloth begat Shimeam: and they also dwelt with their brethren at Jerusalem, over against their brethren. 39. And Ner begat Kish, and Kish begat Saul, and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchishua, and Abinadab, and Esh-baal. 40. And the son of Jonathan was Merib-baal: and Merib-baal begat Micah. 41. And the sons of Micah were Pithon, and Melech, and Tahrea, and Ahaz. 42. And Ahaz begat Jarah, and Jarah begat Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begat Moza, 43. And Moza begat Binea; and Rephaiah his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son. And Azel had six sons, whose names are these, Azrikam, Bocheru, and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadiah, and Hanan. These were the sons of Azel.

These verses are the very same with chap. viii. 29—33. giving an account of the ancestors of Saul, and the posterity of Jonathan: there it is the conclusion of the genealogy of Benjamin; here it is an introduction to the story of Saul. We take the repetition as we find it; but if we admit that there are in the originals, especially in these books, some errors of the transcribers, I should be tempted to think this repetition arose from a blunder. Some one in copying out these genealogies have written those words, ver. 34. *These dwell in Jerusalem*, cast his eye on the same words, chap. viii. *These dwell in Jerusalem*, and so went on with what followed there, instead of going on with what followed here; and, when he perceived his mistake, was loth to make a blot in his book, and so let it stand. We have a rule in our law; *redundans non nocet*; what is only superfluous, is not noxious.

C H A P. X.

The design of Ezra in these books of the Chronicles, was to preserve the records of the house of David, which though more sunk and lessened, in a common eye, by the captivity; yet grew more and more illustrious in the eyes of those that lived by faith, by the nearer approach of the son of David. And therefore he repeats not the history of Saul's reign, but only of his death, by which way was made for David to the throne. In this chapter we have, (1.) The fatal rout which the Philistines gave to Saul's army, and the fatal stroke he gave himself, ver. 1—7. (2.) The

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Philistines triumph therein, ver. 8—10. (3.) The respect which the men of Jabesh-gilead shewed to the royal corps, ver. 11, 12. (4.) The reason of Saul's rejection, ver. 13, 14.

1. NOW the Philistines fought against Israel, and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa. 2. And the Philistines followed hard after Saul, and after his sons, and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, the sons of Saul. 3. And the battle went fore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers. 4. Then said Saul to his armour-bearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come, and abuse me. But his armour-bearer would not, for he was fore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. 5. And when his armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise on the sword, and died. 6. So Saul died, and his three sons, and all his house died together. 7. And when all the men of Israel that were in the valley saw that they fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, then they forsook their cities, and fled: and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

This account of Saul's death is the same with that which we had 1 Sam. xxxi. 1, &c. We need not repeat the exposition of it; only let us observe,

1. Princes sin, and the people suffer for it. It was a bad time with Israel, when they fled before the Philistines, and fell down slain, ver. 1. when they quitted their cities, and the Philistines came and dwelt in them, ver. 7. We do not find that they were at this time guilty of idolatry, as they had been before in the days of the judges, and were after in the days of the king: Samuel had reformed them, and they were reformed; and yet they are thus given to the spoil and to the robbers: no doubt, there was enough in them to deserve it; but that which divine justice had chiefly an eye to, was the sin of Saul. Note, princes and great men should in a special manner take heed of provoking God's wrath; for if they kindle that fire, they know not how many may be consumed by it for their sakes.

2. Parents sin, and the children suffer for it. When the measure of Saul's iniquity was full, and his day came to fall, (which David foretold, 1 Sam. xxvi. 10.) he not only descended into battle and perished himself, but his sons (all but Ishbosheth) perished with him, and Jonathan among the rest, that gracious generous man, for all things come alike to all. Thus was the iniquity of the fathers visited upon the children; and they fell as parts of the condemned father. Note, they that love their seed must leave their sins, lest they perish not alone in their iniquity, but bring ruin on their families with themselves, or entail a curse upon them when they are gone.

3. Sinners sin, and at length suffer for it themselves, though they be long reprieved: for though sentence be not executed speedily, it will be executed. It was so upon Saul; and the manner of his fall was such as in others particulars answered his sin. (1.) He had thrown a javelin more than once at David, and missed him; but the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers. (2.) He had commanded Doeg to slay the priests of the Lord, and now in despair he commands his armour-bearer to draw his sword and thrust him through. (3.) He that disobeyed the command of God, in not destroying the Amalekites, his armour-bearer disobeys his command in not destroying him. (4.) He that was murderer of the priests, is justly left to himself to be his own murderer; and his family is cut off, who cut off the city of the priests. See, and say, *The Lord is righteous.*

8. And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen in mount Gilboa. 9. And when they had stripped him, they took his head and his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to carry tidings unto their idols and to the people. 10. And they put his armour in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. 11. ¶ And when all Jabesh-gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul; 12. They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days. 13. ¶ So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; 14. And inquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.

Here, 1. From the triumph of the Philistines over the body of Saul, we may learn, (1.) That the greater dignity men are advanced to the greater disgrace they are in danger of falling into. Saul's dead body, because he was a king, was abused more than any other of the slain. Advancement makes men a mark for malice. (2.) That if we give not to God the glory of our successes, even the Philistines will rise up in judgment against us and condemn us; for when they had obtained a victory over Saul they sent tidings to their idols; poor idols, they knew not what was done a few miles off, till the tidings were brought them; nor then neither. They also put Saul's armour in the house of their god, ver. 10. Shall Dagon have so great a room in their triumphs, and the true and living God be forgotten in ours?

3. From the triumph of the men of Jabesh-gilead in the rescue of the bodies of Saul and his sons, we learn, That there is a respect owing to the remains of the deceased; especially of deceased princes. We are not to inquire concerning the eternal state, that must be left to God, but we must treat the dead body as those who remember it has been united to an immortal soul, and must be so again.

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3. From

3. From the triumph of divine justice in the ruin of Saul, we may learn (1.) That sin of sinners will certainly find them out, sooner or later. *Saul died for his transgression.* (2.) That no man's greatness can exempt him from the judgments of God. (3.) Disobedience is a killing thing. *Saul died for not keeping the word of the Lord*, by which he was ordered to destroy the Amalekites. (4.) Consulting with witches is a sin that fills the measure of iniquity as soon as any thing. *Saul inquired of one that had a familiar spirit, and inquired not of the Lord, therefore he slew him*, ver. 13, 14. *Saul slew himself, and yet it is said, God slew him; what is done by wicked hands, yet is done by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.* They that abandon themselves to the devil, shall be abandoned to him; so shall their doom be. It is said, *1 Sam. xxviii. 6. Saul did inquire of the Lord, and he answered him not; but here it is said, Saul did not enquire of God, for he did not till he was brought to the last extremity, and then it was too late.*

C H A P. XI.

In this chapter is repeated, (1.) The elevation of David to the throne, immediately upon the death of Saul, by common consent, ver. 1—3. (2.) His gaining the castle of Zion out of the hands of the Jebusites, ver. 4—9. (3.) The catalogue of his worthies, and the great men of his kingdom, ver. 10—47.

1. **T**HEN all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh. 2. And moreover in time past, even when Saul was king, thou wast he that leddest out, and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel. 3. Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron, before the LORD; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD, by Samuel. 4. ¶ And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which is Jebus; where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land. 5. And the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, Thou shalt not come hither. Nevertheless, David took the castle of Zion, which is the city of David. 6. And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain. So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief. 7. And David dwelt in the castle; therefore they called it, The city of David. 8. And he built the city round about, even from Millo round about: and Joab repaired the rest of the city. 9. So David waxed greater and greater: for the LORD of hosts was with him.

David is here brought to the possession,

1. Of the throne of Israel, after he had reigned seven years in Hebron over Judah only. In consideration of his relation to them, ver. 1. his former good services, and especially the divine designation, ver. 2. they anointed him their king, he covenanted to protect them, and to bear faith and true allegiance to him. ver. 3. Observe, (1.) God's counsels will be fulfilled at last, whatever difficulties lie in the way. If God has said, David shall rule it is in vain to oppose it. (2.) Men that have long stood in their own light, when they have wearied themselves with their lying vanities, it is to be hoped, will understand the things that belong to their peace, and return to their own mercies. (3.) Between prince and people there is an original compact, which both ought religiously to observe. If ever any prince might have claimed an absolute despotic power, David might, and might as safely as any be intrusted with it, and yet he made a covenant with the people, took the coronation oath to rule by law.

2. Of the strong-hold of Zion, which was held by the Jebusites till David's time. Whether David had a particular eye upon it as a place fit to make a royal city, or that he had a promise of it from God, it seems it was one of his first exploits to make himself master of that fort; and when he had it, he called it the city of David, ver. 7. To this reference is had, *Psal. ii. 6. I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.* See here what quickens and engages resolution in great undertakings. (1.) Opposition. When the Jebusites set David at defiance, and said, *Thou shalt not come hither*, he resolved to force it, whatever it cost him. (2.) Prospect of preferment: when David proposed to give the general's place to him that would lead the attack upon the castle of Zion, Joab was fired with the proposal, and he went up first, and was chief. It has been said, Take away honour out of the soldier's eye, and you cut off the spur from his heels.

10. ¶ These also are the chief of the mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, and with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD, concerning Israel. 11. And this is the number of the mighty men whom David had; Jathobeam, an Hachmonite, the chief of the captains: he lifted up his spear against three hundred slain by him at one time. 12. And after him was Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, who was one of the three mighties. 13. He was with David at Pas-dammin, and there the Philistines were gathered together to battle, where was a parcel of ground full of barley; and the people fled from before the Philistines. 14. And they set themselves in the midst of that parcel, and delivered it, and slew the Philistines: and the LORD saved them by a great deliverance. 15. ¶ Now three of the thirty captains went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam, and the host of the Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim. 16. And David was then in the hold, and the Philistines' garrison was then at Beth-lehem. 17. And David

longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, that is at the gate! 18. And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Beth-lehem, that was by the gate, and took it, and brought it to David; but David would not drink of it, but poured it out to the LORD. 19. And said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with the jeopardy of their lives they brought it: therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mightiest. 20. ¶ And Abithai the brother of Joab, he was chief of the three: for lifting up his spear against three hundred, he slew them, and had a name among the three. 21. Of the three, he was more honourable than the two for he was their captain; howbeit, he attained not unto the first three. 22. Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done many acts; he slew two lion-like men of Moab; also he went down and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day. 23. And he slew an Egyptian, a man of great stature, five cubits high, and in the Egyptian's hand was a spear like a weaver's beam, and he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear. 24. These things did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had a name among the three mighties. 25. Behold, he was honourable among the thirty, but attained not to the first three: and David set him over his guard. 26. ¶ Also the valiant men of the armies were, Asahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan the son of Dodo, of Beth-lehem, 27. Shammoth the Harorite, Helez the Pelonite, 28. Ira the son of Ikkehi the Tekoite, Abiezer the Antothite. 29. Sibbecai, the Hushathite, Ithai the Ahohite. 30. Maharai the Netophathite, Heled the son of Baanah the Netophathite, 31. Ithai the son of Ribai of Gibeon, that pertained to the children of Benjamin, Benaiah the Pirathonite, 32. Hurai of the brooks of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite, 33. Azmaveth the Baharumite, Eliahba the Shaalbonte, 34. The sons of Hashem the Gizonite, Jonathan, the son of Shage the Hararite, 35. Ahiam the son of Sacar the Hararite, Eliphal the son of Ur, 36. Hopher the Mecherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite, 37. Hezro the Carmelite, Naarai the son of Ezbai, 38. Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar the son of Haggeri. 39. Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai, the Berothite, the armour-bearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah. 40. Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, 41. Uriah the Hittite, Zabad the son of Ahlai, 42. Adina the son of Shiza the Reubenite, a captain of the Reubenites, and thirty with him, 43. Hanan the son of Maachah, and Joshaphat the Mithnite, 44. Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jehiel the sons of Hothan the Aroerite. 45. Jedaiel the son of Shimri, and Joha his brother the Tizite, 46. Eliel the Mahavite, and Jeribai, and Joshaviah, the sons of Elnaam, and Ithmah the Moabite, 47. Eliel, and Obed, and Jasiel the Mesobaite.

We have here an account of David's worthies, the great men of his time that served him, and were preferred by him. The first edition of this catalogue we had, *2 Sam. xxiii. 8, &c.* This is much the same, only that these named here from ver. 41. to the end are added. Observe,

1. The connection of this catalogue with that which is said concerning David, ver. 9. (1.) *David waxed greater and greater*, and these were his mighty men. Much of the strength and honour of great men is borrowed from their servants, and depends upon them, which cannot but somewhat diminish pomp and power, in the opinion of those that are wise. David is great, because he has great men about him; take these away, and he is where he was. (2.) *The Lord of hosts was with him, and these were the mighty men which he had.* God was with him, and wrought for him, but by men and means, and the use of second causes. By this it appeared God was with him, that he inclined the hearts of those to come over to him, that were able to serve his interests. As if God be for us, none can be against us; so if God be for us, all shall be for us that we have occasion for. Yet David ascribed his success and increase not to the hosts he had, but to the Lord of hosts; not to the mighty men that were with him, but to the mighty God, whose presence with us is all in all.

2. The title of this catalogue, ver. 10. *These are the men who strengthened themselves with him*: In strengthening him, they strengthened themselves, and their own interest: for his advancement was theirs. What we do in our places for the support of the kingdom of the Son of David we shall be gainers by: In strengthening it, we strengthen ourselves. It may be read, *They held strongly with him, and with all Israel.* Note, When God has work to do, he will not want fitting instruments so do it with. If it be work that requires mighty men, mighty men shall be either found or made to effect it, according to the word of the Lord.

3. That which made all these men honourable, was the good services that they did to their king and country; they helped to make David king, ver. 10. A good piece of work? They slew the Philistines and other public enemies, and were instrumental to save Israel. Note, The way to be great, is to do good. Nor did they gain this honour without labour, and the hazard of their lives. The honours of Christ's kingdom are prepared for those that fight the good fight of faith, that labour and suffer, and are willing to venture all, even life itself, for Christ and a good conscience. It is by

by a patient continuance in well-doing, that we must seek for glory, and honour, and immortality. And they that are faithful to the Son of David, shall find their names registered and enrolled much more to their honour, than these here are in the records of fame.

4. Among all the great exploits of David's mighty men, here is nothing great mentioned concerning David himself, but his *pouring out water before the Lord*, which he had longed for, ver. 18, 19. And there were four very honourable dispositions of David appeared in that action, which, for aught I know, make it as great as any of the achievements of those worthies. (1.) Repenting of his own weakness. It is really an honour to a man, when he is made sensible, that he has said or done any thing unadvisedly, to unsay it, and undo it again by repentance; as it is a shame to a man, when he has said or done amiss, to stand to it. (2.) Denial of his own appetite: He longed for the water of the well of Bethlehem, but when he had it he would not drink it, because he would not so far humour himself, and gratify a foolish fancy. He that has such a rule as this *over his own spirit*, is better than the mighty. It is an honour to a man to have the command of himself, but he that will command himself, must sometimes cross himself. (3.) Devotion towards God: That water which he thought too good, too precious for his own drinking, he *poured it out to the Lord*, for a drink-offering. If we have any thing better than another, let God be honoured with it, who is the best, and should have the best. (4.) Tenderness of his servants: It put him into the greatest confusion imaginable, to think that three brave men should go in hazard of their lives to fetch water for him; in his account it turns the water into blood. It is the honour of great men not to be prodigal of the blood of those they employ, but in all the commands they give them to put their own souls into their souls' stead.

5. In the wonderful achievements of these heroes, the power of God must be acknowledged: How could one slay three hundred, and another the same number, ver. 11—20. another two lion-like men, ver. 22. and another an Egyptian giant, ver. 23. if they had not had an extraordinary presence of God with them? according to that promise, *Josh. xxiii. 10. One man of you shall chase a thousand, for the Lord your God fighteth for you.*

6. One of these worthies is said to be an Ammonite, ver. 39. another a Moabite, ver. 46. and yet the law was, that an Ammonite and a Moabite should not enter into the congregation of the Lord, Deut. xxii. 3. These, it is likely, had approved themselves to hearty for the interest of Israel, that in their case it was thought fit to dispense with that law, and the rather, because it was an indication that the son of David would have worthies among the Gentiles; with him there is neither Greek nor Jew.

CHAP. XII.

What the mighty did towards making David king, we read in the foregoing chapter. here we are told what the many did towards it. It was not all at once, but gradually that David ascended the throne. His kingdom was to last, and therefore, like fruits that keep longest, it ripened slowly. After he had long waited for the vacancy of the throne, it was at two steps, and those above seven years distant, that he ascended it: now we are here told, (1.) What help came in to him to Ziklag to make him king of Judah, ver. 1—22. (2.) What help came in to him to Hebron to make him king over all Israel, above seven years after, ver. 23—40.

1. **N**OW these are they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish: and they were among the mighty men, helpers of the war. 2. They were armed with bows and could use both the right hand and the left, in hurling stones, and shooting arrows out of a bow, even of Saul's brethren of Benjamin. 3. The chief was Abiezer, then Joash, the sons of Shemaah, the Gibeathite, and Jeziel, and Pelet, the sons of Azmaveth, and Beraiah, and Jehu the Antothite, 4. And Ishmaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty man among the thirty, and over the thirty, and Jeremiah, and Jahaziel, and Johanan, and Josabad the Gederathite, 5. Eluzai, and Jerimoth and Bealiah, and Shemariah, and Shephatiah, the Haruphite, 6. Elkanah, and Jesiah, and Azarcel, and Joezer, and Jashobeam, the Korhites, 7. And Joelah, and Zebadiah, the sons of Jeroham of Gedor. 8. And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David, into the hold to the wilderness, men of might, and men of war fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as the roes upon the mountains: 9. Ezer the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third, 10. Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth, 11. Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh, 12. Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth, 13. Jeremiah the tenth, Machbanai the eleventh. 14. These were the sons of Gad, captains of the host: one of the least was over an hundred, and the greatest over a thousand. 15. These are they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all its banks, and they put to flight all them of the valleys, both toward the east, and toward the west. 16. And there came of the children of Benjamin, and Judah, to the hold unto David. 17. And David went out to meet them, and answered and said unto them, If ye be come peaceably unto me, to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you: but if ye be come to betray me to mine enemies, seeing there is no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it. 18. Then the spirit came upon Amasai, who was chief of the captains, and he said, Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse: Peace, peace, be unto thee, and peace be to thine helpers; for

thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band. 19. And there fell some of Manasseh to David (when he came with the Philistines against Saul to battle, they helped them not: for the lords of the Philistines upon advertisement sent him away, saying, He will fall to his master Saul, to the jeopardy of our heads.) 20. As he went to Ziklag, there fell to him of Manasseh, Adnah, and Jozabab, and Jedaiel, and Michael, and Jozabab, and Elihu, and Zithai, captains of the thousands that were of Manasseh. 21. And they helped David against the band of the rovers: for they were all mighty men of valour, and were captains in the host. 22. For at that time day by day, there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God.

We have here an account of them that appeared and acted as David's friends upon the death of Saul, to bring about the revolution then. All the forces he had while he was persecuted, was but six hundred men, those served for his guards, but when the time was come that he must begin to act offensively, providence brought in more to his assistance. Even while he kept himself close because of Saul, ver. 1. he did not appear to invite or encourage his friends and well-wishers to come in to him, not foreseeing the death of Saul so near. God was inclining and preparing them to come over to him with seasonable succours: They that trust God to do his work for them in his own way and time, shall find his providence out-doing all their forecast and contrivance. The war was God's, and he found out helpers of the war, whose forwardness to act for the man God designed for the government, is here recorded to their honour.

1. Some, even of Saul's brethren, of the tribe of Benjamin, and akin to him, came over to David, ver. 2. What moved them to it we are not told, probably, a generous indignation at the base treatment which Saul, one of their tribe, gave him, animated them to appear the more vigorously for him, that the guilt and reproach of it might not lie upon them. These Benjamites are described to be men of great dexterity, that were trained up in shooting and slinging, and used both hands alike, ingenious, active men, a few of these might do David a great deal of service. Several of the leading men of them are here named. See Judg. xx. 16.

2. Some of the tribe of Gad, though seated on the other side Jordan, had such a conviction of David's title to, and fitness for the government, that they separated themselves from their brethren (and a laudable separation it was) to go to David, though he was in the hold in the wild reefs, ver. 8. probably, some of his strongholds in the wildernesses of Engedi; they were but few, eleven in all, here named, but they added much to David's strength. Those that had hitherto come in to his assistance, were most of them men of broken fortunes, distressed, discontented, and soldiers of fortune, that came to him rather for protection than to do him any service, 1 Sam. xxii. 2. But these Gadites were brave men, men of war, and fit for the battle, ver. 8. For, (1.) They were able bodied men, men of incredible swiftness, not to fly from, but to fly upon the enemy, and to pursue the scattered forces; in this they were as swift as the roes upon the mountains, so that no man could out-run them; and yet they had faces like the faces of lions, so that no man could out-fight them. (2.) They were disciplined men, trained up to military exercises; they could handle shield and buckler, use both offensive and defensive weapons. (3.) They were officers of the militia in their own tribe, ver. 14. So that though they did not bring soldiers with them, they had them at command; hundreds, thousands. (4.) They were daring men, that could break through the greatest difficulties: Upon some expedition or other, perhaps this to David, they swam over Jordan, when it overflowed all its banks, ver. 15. Those are fit to be employed in the cause of God, that can venture thus in a dependence upon the divine protection. (5.) They were men that what business they engaged in they would go through with. What enemies they were that they met with in the valleys, when they had passed Jordan, doth not appear; but they put them to flight with their lion-like faces, and pursued them with matchless fury, both toward the east, and toward the west; which way soever they turned, they followed their blow, and did not do their work by halves.

3. Some of Judah and Benjamin came to him, ver. 16. Their leader was Amasai; whether the same with that Amasa that afterwards sided with Abtalom, (2 Sam. xvii. 25.) or no, doth not appear. Now here we have,

(1.) David's prudent treaty with them, ver. 17. He was surprised to see them, and could not but conceive some jealousy of the intentions of their coming, having been too often in danger by the treachery of the men of Ziph and the men of Keilah, who yet were all men of Judah: he might well be timorous, whose life was so much struck at; might well be suspicious, who had been deceived in so many, that he said in his haste, *all men are liars*. No marvel then, he meets these men of Judah with caution. Observe how he puts the matter to themselves, how fairly he deals with them: As they are, they shall find him, so shall all that deal with the Son of David. 1. If they be faithful and honourable, he will be their rewarder. *If ye come peaceably unto me to help me; though he come late, and have left me exposed a great while; though you bring no great strength with you to turn the scale for me, yet I will thankfully accept your goodwill, and my heart shall be knit unto you.* I will love you and honour you, and do you all the kindness I can. Affections, respects, and services that are cordial and sincere, will find favour with a good man, as they do with a good God, though clogged with infirmities, and the products of them turning to no great account. But, 2. If they be false, and come to betray him into the hands of Saul, under colour of friendship, he leaves them to God to be their avenger, as he is, and will be of every thing that is treacherous and perfidious. Never was man more violently run upon, and run down than David was, (except the Son of David himself) and yet he had the testimony of his conscience, that there was no wrong in his hands: he meant no ill to any man, which was his rejoicing in the day of evil, and enabled him when he feared treachery, to commit his cause to him that judgeth righteously, he will not be judge in his own cause, though a wife man; nor avenge himself, though a man of valour: but let the righteous God, who hath said, *vengeance is mine*, do both; *The god of our fathers look thereon, and rebuke it.* Observe in this appeal, 1. He calls God the God of our fathers, both his father's and theirs. Thus he minds them not to deal ill with him, for they both were descendents from the same patriarchs, they both were dependants on the same God; Thus he encourageth himself to believe that God would right him, if he were abused; for he was the God of his fathers, and therefore a blessing was entailed upon him: and a God to all Israel, and therefore not only a judge to all the earth, but particularly determining controversies between contending Israelites. 2. He doth not imprecate any fearful judgment upon them, though they should deal treacherously

clerkly, but very modestly refers himself to the divine wisdom and justice, the Lord *look thereon*, and judge as he sees (for he sees mens hearts) and *rebuke it*. It becomes those that appeal to God, to express themselves with great temper and moderation; for the wrath of man *works not the righteousness of God*.

(2.) Their hearty closure with him, *ver. 18*. Amasai was their spokesman, on whom the *Spirit of the Lord* came, not a spirit of prophecy, but a spirit of wisdom, and resolution, according to the occasion, putting words into his mouth, unpremeditated, which were very proper both to give David satisfaction, and to animate those that accompanied him; nothing could be said more fine, more lively, nor more penitent to the occasion. For himself and all his associates, 1. He professeth a very cordial adherence to David and his interest, against all that opposed him, and a resolution to stand by him with the hazard of all that was dear to him. *Thine are we, David, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse*. In calling him son of Jesse, they mind themselves, that he was lineally descended from Nahshon and Salmon, who in their days were princes of the tribe of Judah. Saul had called him so in disdain, 1 Sam. xx. 27.—xxii. 7. but they look upon it as his honour. They were convinced that he was on God's side, and that God was on his side, and therefore *thine are we, David, and on thy side*. It is good, if we must side, to side with those that side with God, and have God with them. 2. He wisheth prosperity to David and his cause, not drinking a health, but praying for peace to him and all his friends and well-wishers: *Peace, peace be unto thee*, all the good thy heart desires, and *peace be to thine helpers*, among whom we desire to be reckoned, that peace may be on us. 3. He assures him of help from heaven; *for thy God helpeth thee*, therefore we wish peace may be, and therefore we doubt not but peace shall be to thee and thy helpers. God is thy God, and those that have him for their God, no doubt, have him for their helper in every time of need and danger. From these expressions of Amasai we may take instruction how to testify our affection and allegiance to the Lord Jesus; his we must be without reservation, or power of revocation: on his side we must be forward to appear and act; to his interest we must be hearty well-wishers: Hosanna; prosperity to his gospel and kingdom; for his God helpeth him, and will till he have put down all opposing rule, principality and power.

(2.) David's cheerful acceptance of them into his interest and friendship. Charity and honour teach us to let fall our jealousies, as soon as satisfaction is given us: *David received them*, and preferred them to be *captains of the band*.

4. Some of Manasseh likewise joined in with him, *ver. 19*. Providence gave them a fair opportunity to do it, when he and his men marched through their country upon this occasion. Achish took David with him when he went out to fight with Saul; but the Lords of the Philistines obliged him to withdraw; we have the story, 1 Sam. xxix. 4, &c. In his return, some great men of Manasseh, who had no heart to go join with Saul against the Philistines, struck in with David; and very seasonably, to help him against the band of the Amalekites, who had plundered Ziklag; they were not many, but they were all mighty men, and did David good service upon that occasion, 1 Sam. xxx. See how providence provides. David's interest grew strangely, just then when he had occasion to make use of it, *ver. 22*. Auxiliary forces flocked in daily, till he had a great host. When the promise comes to the birth, leave it to God to find strength to bring forth.

23. ¶ And these are the numbers of the bands that were ready armed to the war, and came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD. 24. The children of Judah that bare shield and spear, were six thousand and eight hundred, ready armed to the war. 25. Of the children of Simeon, mighty men of valour for the war, seven thousand and one hundred. 26. Of the children of Levi, four thousand and six hundred. 27. And Jehoiada was the leader of the Aaronites, and with him were three thousand and seven hundred. 28. And Zadok a young man mighty of valour, and of his father's house twenty and two captains. 29. And of the children of Benjamin the kindred of Saul, three thousand: for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul. 30. And of the children of Ephraim, twenty thousand and eight hundred mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers. 31. And of the half-tribe of Manasseh, eighteen thousand which were expressed by name to come and make David king. 32. And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred, and all their brethren were at their commandment. 33. Of Zebulun such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart. 34. And of Naphtali a thousand captains with them, with shield and spear, thirty and seven thousand. 35. And of the Danites expert in war, twenty and eight thousand and six hundred. 36. And of Asher, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, forty thousand. 37. And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half-tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war for the battle, an hundred and twenty thousand. 38. All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel, were of one heart to make David king. 39. And there they were with David three days eating and drinking: for their brethren had prepared for them. 40. Moreover they that were nigh them, even unto Issachar, and Zebulun, and Naphtali, brought bread upon asses, and on camels, and on mules, and

on oxen, and meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly, for there was joy in Israel.

We have here an account of those who were active in perfecting the settlement of David upon the throne, after the death of Ish-bosheth. We read, chap. xi. 1. and before, 2 Sam. v. 1. that all the tribes of Israel came, either themselves or by their representatives, to Hebron to make David king; now here we have an account of the quota which every tribe brought in ready armed to the war, in case there should have been any opposition, *ver. 23*. We may observe here,

1. That those tribes that lived nearest, brought in the fewest numbers; Judah but six thousand; *ver. 24*. Simeon but seven thousand, *ver. 25*. whereas Zebulun, that lay remote, brought fifty thousand, Asher forty thousand, and the two tribes and a half on the other side Jordan, one hundred and twenty thousand; not as if the next adjacent tribes were cold in the cause, but they shewed as much of their prudence in bringing few, since all the rest lay so near within call, as the others did of their zeal in bringing so many. The men of Judah had enough to do to entertain those that came from afar.

The Levites themselves and the priests, called here the Aaronites, appeared very hearty in this cause, and were ready, if there were occasion, to fight for David, as well as pray for him, because they knew he was called of God to the government, *ver. 26, 27, 28*.

3. Even some of the kindred of Saul came over to David, *ver. 29*. not so many as of the other tribes, because a foolish affection for their own tribe, and a jealousy for the honour of it, kept many of them long in the sinking interest of Saul's family. Kindred should never over-rule conscience. Call no man so Father, but God.

4. It is said of most of these, that they were *mighty men of valour*, *ver. 25, 28, 30*. of others, that they were *expert in war*, *ver. 35, 36*. and of them all, that they *could keep rank*, *ver. 38*. They had a great deal of martial fire, and yet governable, and subject to the rules of order. Warm hearts, but cool heads.

5. Some were so considerate as to bring with them arms, and all instruments of war, *ver. 23, 33, 37*. for how could they think David should be able to furnish them?

6. The men of Issachar were the fewest of all: but two hundred, and yet as serviceable to David's interest, as those that brought in the greatest numbers; these few being in effect the whole tribe: for, (1.) They were men of great conduct, above any of their neighbours. Men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do. They understood the natural times, could discern the face of the sky, were weather-wise, could advise their neighbours in the proper times, for ploughing, sowing, reaping, &c. The ceremonial times, the times appointed for the solemn feasts, therefore they are said to call the people to the mountain, Deut. xxxiii. 19. for almanacks were not then so common as now. Or rather, the political times; they understood public affairs, the temper of the nation, and the tendencies of the present events: It is the periphrasis of statesmen, that they know the times, Eccl. i. 13. Those of that tribe were great newsmongers, and had good intelligence from abroad: and they made a good use of it, they knew what Israel ought to do: from their observation and experience, they learned both their own and others duty and interest. In this critical juncture, they knew Israel ought to make David king; it was not only expedient but necessary, the present posture of affairs called for it. The men of Issachar dealt modestly in country business, and did not much intermeddle in public affairs, which gave them an opportunity of observing others, and conversing with themselves. A stander-by sees sometimes more than a gamester. (2.) They were men of great interests, for all their brethren were at their commandment. The commonality of that tribe having bowed their shoulders to bear, (Gen. xlix. 15.) the great men had them at their beck; hence we read of the princes of Issachar, Judg. v. 15. They knew how to rule, and the rest knew how to obey. It is happy indeed, when those that should lead are intelligent and judicious, and those who are to follow modest and obsequious.

7. It is said of them all, they engaged in this enterprise with a perfect heart, *ver. 38*. and particularly of the men of Zebulun, that they were not of double heart, *ver. 33*. They were in this matter, Israelites indeed, in whom was no guile. And this was their perfection, that they were of one heart in it, *ver. 38*. None had any separate interest, but all for the public good.

Lastly, The men of Judah, and others of the adjacent tribes, prepared for the victualling of their respective camps when they came to Hebron, *ver. 39, 40*. They that were at the least pains in travelling to this convention or congress of the states, thought themselves obliged to be at so much the more charge in entertaining the rest, that there might be something of an equality. A noble feast was made (was made for laughter, Eccles. x. 19.) upon this occasion, for there was joy in Israel, *ver. 40*. And good reason, for when the righteous bear rule, the city rejoiceth. Thus when the throne of Christ is set up in a soul, there is, or ought to be great joy in that soul; and provision is made for the feasting of it, not as here, for two or three days, but for the whole life; nay, for eternity.

C H A P. XIII.

In the foregoing chapter we had David made king, by which the civil government was happily settled; in this chapter care is taken about religion: (1.) David consults with the representatives of the people about bringing up the ark out of its obscurity into a public place, and it is resolved on, *ver. 1—4*. (2.) With a great deal of solemnity and joy it is carried from Kirjath-jearim, *ver. 5—8*. (3.) Uzza is struck dead for touching it, which for the present spoils the solemnity, and stops the proceeding, *ver. 9—14*.

1. AND David consulted with the captains of thousands, and hundreds, and with every leader. 2. And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us. 3. And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul. 4. And all the congregation said, that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. 5

So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt, even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim. 6. And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, *that is*, to Kirjath-jearim, which *belonged* to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the LORD, that dwelleth *between* the cherubims, whose name is called *on it*. 7. And they carried the ark of God in a new cart, out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drove the cart. 8. And David and all Israel played before God with all *their* might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.

Here is, 1. David's pious proposal to bring up the ark of God to Jerusalem, that the royal city might be the holy city, *ver.* 1, 2, 3. This part of the story we had not in *Samuel*. We may observe in this proposal,

(1.) That as soon as David was warm in his throne, he had thoughts concerning the ark of God: *Let us bring that to us*, *ver.* 3. Two things he aimed at herein: 1. To do honour to God, by shewing respect to his ark, the token of his presence. As soon as he had power in his hand, he would use it for the advancement and encouragement of religion. Note, It ought to be the first and greatest care of those that are enriched and preferred, to honour God with their honours, and to serve him and the interest of his kingdom among men with their wealth and power. Not what pompous thing shall I do now, or what pleasant thing; but what pious thing; to have the comfort and benefit of that sacred oracle. Let us bring it to us, not only that we may be a credit to it, but that it may be a blessing to us. They that honour God, profit themselves. Note, It is the wisdom of those that are setting out in the world to take God's ark with them, and to make his oracles their counsellors, and his laws their rule. Those are likely to proceed in the favour of God, that thus begin in the fear of God.

(2.) That he consulted with the leaders of the people about it, *ver.* 1. Though it was without doubt a very good work, and being king he had authority to command the doing of it; yet he chose rather to do it by consultation. 1. That he might shew respect to the great men of the kingdom, and put honour upon them. Though they made him king, yet he would not rule with an high hand. We will, and command, and it is our royal pleasure that you do so and so, and we will be obeyed: But, *If it seem good to you*; and you think that the motion comes from the Lord our God, let us send our orders for this purpose. No prince that is wise will covet to be absolute. The people's allegiance is best secured by taking their concurrence in their representatives. Happy then art thou, O Britain! 2. That he might be advised by them in the manner of doing it; whether just now, whether publicly: David was a very intelligent man himself, and yet consulted with his captains; for *in the multitude of counsellors there is safety*. It is wisdom to make use of others wisdom. 3. That as they joined in it, it might pass the better for a national act, and so might procure a national blessing.

(3.) That he would have all the people summoned to attend on this occasion, both for the honour of the ark, and for the people's satisfaction and edification, *ver.* 2. Observe, 1. He calls the common people brethren, which speaks his humility and condescension, notwithstanding his advancement, and the tender concern he had for them. Thus our Lord Jesus is not ashamed to call his people brethren, *Heb.* ii. 11. 1. He speaks of the people as a remnant that was escaped; *Our brethren that are left in all the land of Israel*. They had been under scattering providences: their wars with the Philistines, and with the house of Saul, had wasted the country, and cut off many: we now hope to see an end of these troubles; let them that are left be quickened by late judgments, and present mercies to seek unto God. 3. He takes care that the priests and Levites especially should be summoned to attend the ark, for it was their province in a particular manner. Thus christian magistrates should stir up ministers to do their duty when they see them remiss. 4. That all this is upon supposition that it is of the Lord their God. Though it should *seem good to you* and me, yet if it be not of the Lord our God, we will not do it. Whatever we undertake, this must be our enquiry; Is it of the Lord, is it agreeable to his mind? Can we approve ourselves to him in it? And may we expect that he will own us? (5.) That thus it was requisite they should amend what had been amiss in the last reign, and as it were atone for their neglect, for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul, and that was the reason things went so ill with us: let that original error be amended, and then we may hope to see our affairs in a better posture. Observe, 1. David makes no peevish reflections upon Saul; he doth not say, Saul never cared for the ark, at least in the latter end of his reign; but in general; *we enquired not at it*, making himself and others guilty of the neglect. It better becomes us to judge ourselves than others. Humble good men lament their own share in national guilt, and take shame to themselves, *Dan.* ix. 5, &c.

2. The people's ready agreement to this proposal, *ver.* 4. The thing was *right in the eyes of all the people*; nobody could say to the contrary, but that it was a very good work and very seasonable; so that it was resolved *unanimously*, that they would do so. They that prudently propose a good work, and lead in it, will perhaps find a more ready concurrence in it than they expected. Great men know what a great deal of good they are capable of doing by their influence on others.

3. The solemnity of bringing up the ark, *ver.* 5, &c. which we read before, *2 Sam.* vi. 1, &c. Here therefore we shall only observe, (1.) That it is worth while to travel far to attend the ark of God. They came out of all parts of the country, from the river of Egypt, the utmost part south, to the entering of Hemath, which lay farthest north, *ver.* 5. to grace this solemnity. (2.) That we have reason greatly to rejoice in the revival of neglected ordinances, and the return of the tokens of God's presence. When the light of religion shines out of obscurity, when it is openly and freely professed, is brought into reputation, and countenanced by princes, by great ones, it is such a happy omen to a people, as is worthy to be welcomed with all possible expressions of joy. (3.) When after long disuse ordinances come to be revived, it is too common for even wise and good men to make some mistakes. Who would have thought that David should have made such a blunder as this, to carry the ark upon a cart; *ver.* 7. Because the Philistines so carried it, and a special providence drove the cart, *1 Sam.* vi. 12. he thought they might do so too; but we must walk by rule, not by example, when it varies from the rule; no, not those examples that providence has owned.

9. ¶ And when they came unto the threshing-floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for No. LX.*

the oxen stumbled. 10. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God. 11. And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzza; therefore that place is called Perez-uzza to this day. 12. And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me? 13. So David brought not the ark home to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. 14. And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had.

This breach upon Uzza, which caused all the mirth to cease, we had an account of, *2 Sam.* vi. 6, &c.

1. Let the sin of Uzza warn us all to take heed of presumption, rashness, and irreverence in dealing about holy things, *ver.* 9. and not to think that a good intention will justify a bad action. In our communion with God, we must carefully watch over our own hearts, lest familiarity breed contempt, and we think God is any way beholden to us.

2. Let the punishment of Uzza convince us what a jealous God he is, with whom we have to do: his death like that of Nadab and Abihu, proclaimed aloud, that God will be *sanctified in those that come nigh him*, *Lev.* x. 3. and that the nearer any are to him, the more displeased he is with their presumptions. Let us not dare to trifle with God in our approaches to him, and yet let us, through Christ, *come boldly to a throne of Grace*; for we are under the dispensation of liberty and grace, not of bondage and terror.

3. Let the damp this gave to the joy of Israel, be a memorandum to us always to rejoice with trembling, and to *serve the Lord with fear*, even then when we *serve him with gladness*.

4. Let David's displeasure upon this occasion caution us to take heed to our spirits, when we are under divine rebukes, lest, instead of submitting to God, we quarrel with him. If God be angry with us, shall we dare to be angry with him.

5. Let the stop this put to the solemnity, caution us not to be driven off from our duty by those providences which are only intended to drive us off from our sins. David should have gone on with his work, notwithstanding the breach made upon Uzza, so might the breach have been made up.

Lastly, Let the blessing which the ark brought with it to the house of Obed-edom, encourage us to welcome God's ordinances in our houses, as those that believe the ark is a guest no body shall lose by; nor let it be the less precious to us, for its being to some a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. If the gospel be to some a savour of death unto death, as the ark was unto Uzza, yet let us receive it in the love of it, and it will be to us a savour of life unto life.

C H A P. XIV.

In this chapter we have, (1.) David's kingdom established, *ver.* 1, 2. (2.) His family built up, *ver.* 3—7. (3.) His enemies the Philistines routed in two campaigns, *ver.* 8—17. This is repeated here from *2 Sam.* xv. 11, &c.

1. NOW Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and timber of cedars, with masons, and carpenters, to build him an house. 2. And David perceived that the LORD had confirmed him king over Israel, for his kingdom was lifted up on high, because of his people Israel. 3. ¶ And David took more wives at Jerusalem; and David begat more sons and daughters. 4. Now these are the names of his children which he had in Jerusalem; Shammua, and Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon, 5. And Ithar, and Elithua, and Elpalet, 6. And Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia, 7. And Elithama, and Beeliada, and Eliphalet.

We may observe here,

1. There is no man that has such a sufficiency in himself, but he has need of his neighbours, and has reason to be thankful for their help. David had a very large kingdom, Hiram a very little one, and yet David cannot build him a house to his mind, unless Hiram furnish him with both workmen and materials, *ver.* 1. which is a reason why we should despise none, but as we have opportunity be obliging to all.

2. It is a great satisfaction to a wise man to be settled, and to a good man to see the special providence of God in his settlement. The people had made David king, but he could not be easy, nor think himself happy, till he perceived that the Lord had confirmed him king over Israel, *ver.* 2. Who shall unfix me, if God hath fixed me?

3. We must look upon all our advancements as designed for our usefulness. David's kingdom was lifted up on high, not for his own sake, that he might look great; but because of his people Israel, that he might be a guide and protector to them. We are therefore blessed that we may be blessings. See *Gen.* xii. 2. We are not born, nor do we live for ourselves.

4. It is hard to thrive and not grow secure and indulgent to the flesh. It was David's infirmity, that when he was settled in his kingdom, he took more wives, *ver.* 3. yet the numerous issue he had, added to his honour and strength. Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord. We had an account of David's children, not only in *Samuel*, but in this book, *chap.* iii. 1, &c. and now here again; for it was their honour to have such a father.

8. ¶ And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David; and David heard of it, and went out against them. 9. And the Philistines came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim. 10. And David enquired of God, saying, Shall I go up against the Philistines? and wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto him, Go up, for I will deliver them

them into thine hand. 11. So they came up to Baal-perazim; and David smote them there. Then David said, God hath broken in upon mine enemies, by mine hand, like the breaking forth of waters: therefore they called the name of that place Baal-perazim. 12. And when they had left their gods there, David gave a commandment, and they were burned with fire. 13. And the Philistines yet again spread themselves abroad in the valley. 14. Therefore David enquired again of God; and God said unto him, Go not up after them; turn away from them, and come upon them over-against the mulberry-trees. 15. And it shall be when thou shalt hear a sound of going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that then thou shalt go out to battle; for God is gone forth before thee, to smite the host of the Philistines. 16. David therefore did as God commanded him: and they smote the host of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gazer. 17. And the fame of David went out into all lands; and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations.

This narrative of David's triumphs over the Philistines, is much the same with that, 2 Sam. v. 17, &c.

1. Let the attack which the Philistines made upon David, forbid us to be secure in any settlement or advancement, and engage us to expect molestation in this world. When we are most easy, something or other may come to be a terror or vexation to us. Christ's kingdom will thus be insulted by the serpent's seed, especially when it makes any advances.

2. Let David's enquiring of God once and again upon occasion of the Philistines invading him, direct us in all our ways to acknowledge him, in distress to fly to him, when we are wronged to appeal to him, and when we know not what to do, to ask counsel at his oracles, to put ourselves under his conduct, and to beg of him to shew us a right way.

3. Let David's success encourage us to resist our spiritual enemies in observance of divine directions, and in dependence on divine strength. Resist the devil and he shall flee, as the Philistines did before David.

4. Let the sound of the going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, direct us to attend God's motions, both in his providence, and in the influences of his Spirit. When we perceive God go before us, let us gird up our loins, gird on our armour, and follow him.

5. Let David's burning the gods of the Philistines, when they fell into his hands, teach us a holy indignation against idolatry, and all the remains of it.

6. Let David's thankful acknowledgment of the hand of God in his successes, direct us to bring all our sacrifices of praise to God's altar. *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.*

Lastly, Let the mighty fame and reputation of David, not only in his own kingdom, but among his neighbours, be looked upon as a type and figure of the exalted honour of the son of David, ver. 17. *The fame of David went out into all the lands; he was generally talked of, and admired by all people, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all nations:* All looked upon him as a formidable enemy, and a desirable ally. Thus has God highly exalted our Redeemer, and given him a name above every name.

C H A P. XV.

The bringing up of the ark to the city of David, was a very good work; it was resolved upon chap. xiii. 4. and attempted, but not perfected: it lay by the way in the house of Obed-edom. Now this chapter gives us an account of the completing of that good work. 1. *How it was done more regularly than before.* (1.) *A place was prepared for it,* ver. 1. (2.) *The priests were ordered to carry it,* ver. 2—15. (3.) *The Levites had their offices assigned them in attending on it,* ver. 16—24. 2. *How it was done more successfully than before,* ver. 25. 1. *The Levites made no blunder in their work,* ver. 26. 2. *David and the people met with no damp upon their joy,* ver. 27, 28. *As for Michael's despising David, it was nothing,* ver. 29.

1. **A**ND David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent. 2. Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God, but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God and to minister unto him for ever. 3. And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it. 4. And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites: 5. Of the sons of Kohath; Uriel the chief, and his brethren an hundred and twenty: 6. Of the sons of Merari: Asaiah the chief, and his brethren two hundred and twenty: 7. Of the sons of Gershon; Joel the chief, and his brethren an hundred and thirty: 8. Of the sons of Elizaphan; Shemaiah the chief, and his brethren two hundred: 9. Of the sons of Hebron; Eliel the chief, and his brethren fourscore: 10. Of the sons of Uzziel; Amminadab the chief, and his brethren an hundred and twelve. 11. And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Asaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab. 12. And said unto them, Ye are the chief, of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves both ye and your brethren, that you may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel, unto the place that I have prepared for it. 13. For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach

upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order. 14. So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel. 15. And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders, with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded, according to the word of the LORD. 16. And David spake to the chief of the Levites, to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of music, psalteries, and harps, and cymbals sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy. 17. So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel; and of his brethren, Asaph the son of Berechiah: and of the sons of Merari their brethren, Ethan the son of Kufhaiah: 18. And with them their brethren of the second degree, Zechariah, Ben, and Jaaziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, Eliab, and Benaiah, and Maaseiah, and Mattithiah and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, the porters. 19. So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were appointed to sound with cymbals of brass; 20. And Zechariah, and Aziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, and Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Benaiah, with psalteries on Alamoth; 21. And Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, and Azaziah, with harps on the Sheminith to excel. 22. And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was for song: he instructed about the song, because he was skillful. 23. And Berechiah and Elkanah were door-keepers for the ark. 24. And Shebaniah, and Jehoshaphat, and Nethaneel, and Amasai, and Zechariah, and Benaiah, and Eliezer the priests, did blow with the trumpets before the ark of God: and Obed-edom, and Jehiah were door-keepers for the ark.

Preparation is here made for the bringing of the ark home to the city of David, from the house of Obed-edom. It is here owned, that in the former attempt, though it was a very good work, and in it they sought God, yet they sought him not after the due order, ver. 13. We did not go about our work considerately, and therefore we sped so ill. Note, 1. It is not enough that we do that which is good, but we must do it well; not enough, that we seek God in a due ordinance, but we must seek him in a due order. 2. When we have suffered for our irregularities, we must learn thereby to be more regular; then we answer the end of chastisement.

Let us see how the matter was mended,

1. David now prepared a place for the reception of the ark, before he brought it to him; and thus he sought in the due order. He had not time to build a house, but he pitched a tent for it, ver. 1. probably, according to the pattern shewed to Moses in the mount, or as near it as might be, of curtains and boards. Observe, When he made houses for himself in the city of David, he prepared a place for the ark. Note, Wherefore ever we build for ourselves, we must be sure to make room for God's ark, for a church in the house.

2. David now ordered, that the Levites or priests should carry the ark upon their shoulders. Now he bethought himself of that which he could not but know before, that none ought to carry the ark but the Levites, ver. 2. The Kohathites carried it in their ordinary marches, and therefore had no waggons allotted them, because their work was to bear upon their shoulders, Numb. vii. 9. But upon extraordinary occasions, as when they passed Jordan, and compassed Jericho, the priests carried it. This rule was express, and yet David himself forgot it, and put the ark upon a cart. Note, Even they that are very knowing in the word of God, yet have it not always so ready to them as were to be wished, when they have occasion to use it. Wise and good men may be guilty of an oversight, which, as soon as they are aware of they will correct. David doth not go about to justify what had been done amiss, nor to lay the blame on others, but owns himself guilty with others of not seeking God in a due order, and now takes care not only to summon the Levites to the solemnity, as he did all Israel, ver. 3. and had done before, chap. xiii. 2. but to see that they were assembled, ver. 4. especially the sons of Aaron, ver. 11. to them he gives that solemn charge, ver. 12. *You are the chief of the fathers of the Levites,* therefore do you bring up the ark of the Lord. Note, Those that are advanced above others in dignity, it is expected they go before others in duty; you are the chief, and therefore more is expected from you than from others, both by way of service yourselves, and influence on the rest. You did it not at the first, neither did your duty yourselves, nor took care to instruct us, and we smarted for it, *The Lord made a breach upon us,* We have all smarted for your neglect: This has been by your means; see Mal. i. 9. therefore sanctify yourselves, and mind your business. When those that suffered for doing ill, thus learn to do better, the correction is well bestowed.

3. The Levites and priests were sanctified themselves, ver. 14. and were ready to carry the ark on the shoulders, according to the law, ver. 15. Note, Many that are very remiss in their duty, if they were but faithfully told of it, would reform and do better. The breach upon Uzza, made the priests the more careful to sanctify themselves, i. e. to cleanse themselves from all the ceremonial pollution, and to compose themselves for the solemn service of God, so as to strike a reverence upon the people. Some are made examples, that others may be made exemplary and very cautious.

4. Officers were appointed to be ready to bid the ark welcome, with all possible expressions of joy, ver. 16. David ordered the chief of the Levites to nominate those that they knew to be artists for this service. Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were now first appointed, ver. 17. They undertook to sound with cymbals, ver. 19. others with psalteries, ver. 20. others with harps, on the Sheminith, or eighth, eight notes higher or lower than the rest, according to the rules of concert, ver. 21. Some that were priests blew with trumpets, ver. 24. as was usual at the removal of the ark, Numb. x. 8. and at solemn feasts, Psal. lxxxii. 3. And one was appointed for song, ver. 22. for he was skillful in it, could sing well himself, and instruct others. Note, As every man has received the gift, so he ought to minister the same, 1 Pet. iv. 10. And those that excel in any endowment, should not only use it for common good themselves, but teach others also; and not grudge to make others as wise as themselves. This way of praising God by musical instruments had not hitherto been in use: But David being a prophet, instituted it by divine direction, and added it to the other cardinal ordinances of

of that dispensation, as the apostle calls them, *Heb. ix. 10.* The New Testament keeps up singing of psalms, but has not appointed church-music. Some were appointed to be porters, *ver. 18.* others door-keepers of the ark, *ver. 23, 24.* and one of them was Obed-edom, who reckoned it, no doubt, a place of honour, and accepted it as a recompence for the entertainment he had given to the ark. He had for three months been house-keeper to the ark, and indeed its landlord. But when he might not be so any longer, such an affection had he for it, that he was glad to be its door-keeper.

25. ¶ So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the covenant of the LORD, out of the house of Obed-edom with joy. 26. And it came to pass when God helped the Levites that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks, and seven rams. 27. And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song, with the singers: David also had upon him an ephod of linen. 28. Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps. 29. ¶ And it came to pass, as the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart.

All things being got ready for carrying of the ark to the city of David, and its reception there, we have here an account of the solemnity of its conveyance thither from the house of Obed-edom.

1. God helped the Levites that carried it. The ark was no very great burden, that they that carried it needed an extraordinary help. But, (1.) It is good to take notice of the assistance of the divine providence, even in those things that fall within the compass of our natural powers: If God did not help us we could not stir a step. (2.) In all our religious exercises, we must particularly derive help from heaven. See *Acts xxvi. 22.* All our sufficiency for holy duties is from God. 3. The Levites perhaps, remembering the breach made upon Uzza, were ready to tremble when they took up the ark, but God helped them, i. e. he encouraged them to it, silenced their fears, strengthened their faith. (4.) God helped them to do it decently and well, and without making any blunder. If we perform any religious duties, so as to escape a breach, and come off with our lives, we must own it was God that helped us; for had we been left to ourselves, we should have been guilty of some fatal miscarriages. God's ministers that bear the vessels of the Lord, have special need of divine help in their ministrations, that God in them may be glorified and his church edified. And if God help the Levites, the people have the benefit of it.

2. When they experienced the tokens of God's presence with them, they offered sacrifices of praise to him, *ver. 26.* This also he helped them to do. They offered these bullocks and rams perhaps by way of atonement for the former error, that that may not now be remembered against them, as well as by way of acknowledgement for the help now received.

3. There were great expressions of rejoicing used; the sacred music played, David danced, the singers sang, and the common people shouted, *ver. 27, 28.* This we had before, *2 Sam. vi. 14, 15.* Learn hence, 1. That we serve a good master, who delights to have his servants sing at their work. 2. That times of public reformation are and should be times of public rejoicing. Those are unworthy of the ark, that are not glad of it. 3. It is not any disparagement to the greatest of men to shew themselves zealous in the acts of devotion. Michal indeed despised David, *ver. 29.* but her despising him, did not make him at all despicable: He did not value it himself, nor did any that were wise and good (and why should we covet the esteem of any but such?) think the worse of him.

C H A P. XVI.

This chapter concludes that great affair of the settlement of the ark in the royal city; and with it the settlement of the public worship of God during the reign of David. Here is, (1.) The solemnity with which the ark was fixed, ver. 1—6. (2.) The psalm David gave to be sung on this occasion, ver. 7—36. (3.) The setting of the constant stated worship of God in order from thence-forward, ver. 47—53.

1. SO they brought the ark of God and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and they offered burnt sacrifices and peace-offerings before God. 2. And when David had made an end of offering the burnt-offerings, and the peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD. 3. And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine. 4. ¶ And he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, and to record, and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel: 5. Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, Jeiel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Matithiah, and Eliab, and Benaiah, and Obed-edom: and Jeiel with psalteries, and with harps: but Asaph made a sound with cymbals; 6. Benaiah also and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God.

It was a glorious day when the ark of God was safely lodged in the tent David had pitched for it. That good man had his heart much upon it, could not sleep contentedly till it was done, *Psal. cxxxii. 4.* The circumstances of the ark are now, (1.) better than what they had been. It had been obscure in a country town in the fields of the wood, now it is removed to a public place, to the royal city, where all might have resort to it. It

had been neglected, as a despised broken vessel: now it is attended with veneration, and God is enquired of by it. It had borrowed a room in a private house, which it enjoyed upon courtesy; now it has a habitation of its own entire to itself, is set in the midst of it, and not crowded into a corner. Note, Though God's word and ordinances may be clouded and eclipsed for a time, they shall at length shine out of obscurity. Yet, (2.) They are much short of what was intended in the next reign, when the temple was to be built. This was but a tent, a poor mean dwelling, yet this was the tabernacle, the temple which David in his psalms often speaks of with so much affection. David that pitched a tent for the ark, and stuck to it, did far better than Solomon that built a temple for it, and yet in his latter end turned his back upon it. The church's poorest times were its purest.

Now David is easy in his mind: The ark is fixed, and fixed near him; now see how he takes care,

1. That God have the glory of it. Two ways he gives him honour upon this occasion; (1.) By sacrifices, *ver. 1.* Burnt-offerings in adoration of his perfections; peace-offerings in acknowledgement of his favours. (2.) By songs; he appointed Levites to record this story in a song for the benefit of others, or to celebrate it themselves by *thanking and praising the God of Israel*, *ver. 4.* All our rejoicings must express themselves in thanksgivings to him, from whom all our comforts are received.

2. That the people have the joy of it. They shall fare the better for this day's solemnity, for he gives them all what was worth coming for, not only a royal treat, in honour of the day, *ver. 3.* in which David shewed himself generous to his subjects, as he had found God gracious to him. They, whose hearts are enlarged with holy joy, should shew it by being open-handed: But (which is far better) he gives them a *blessing in the name of the Lord*, as a father, as a prophet, *ver. 2.* he prayed to God for them, and commended them to his grace. *In the name of the Word of the Lord*, so the Targum, the essential eternal Word, who is Jehovah, and through whom all blessings come to us.

7. ¶ Then on that day, David delivered first *this psalm* to thank the LORD into the hands of Asaph and his brethren. 8. Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. 9. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wonderful works. 10. Glory ye in his holy name, let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. 11. Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually. 12. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth; 13. O ye seed of Israel his servant, ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones. 14. He is the LORD our God, his judgments are in all the earth. 15. Be ye mindful always of his covenant: the word which he commanded to a thousand generations; 16. *Even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac:* 17. And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant. 18. Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance; 19. When ye were but few, even a few, and strangers in it. 20. And when they went from nation to nation, and from one kingdom to another people: 21. He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes. 22. *Saying,* Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. 23. Sing unto the LORD all the earth: shew forth from day to day his salvation. 24. Declare his glory among the heathen: his marvellous works among all nations. 25. For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, he also is to be feared above all gods. 26. For all the gods of the people are idols: but the LORD made the heavens. 27. Glory and honour are in his presence, strength and gladness are in his place. 28. Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength. 29. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name: bring an offering and come before him; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness. 30. Fear before him all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved. 31. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The LORD reigneth. 32. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof: let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein. 33. Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the LORD, because he cometh to judge the earth. 34. O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. 35. And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise. 36. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel for ever and ever: and all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD.

We have heard the thanksgiving psalm which David by the spirit composed, and delivered to the chief musician, to be sung upon occasion of the public entry the ark made into the tent prepared for it; and some think he appointed this hymn to be daily used in the temple-service, as duly as the day came; whatever other psalms they sung, they must not omit this. David had penned many psalms before this, some in the time of his troubles by Saul: This was composed before, but was now first delivered into the hand of Asaph, for the use of the church. It is gathered out of several psalms. From the beginning to *ver. 23:* is taken from *Psal. cv. 1, &c.* and then *ver. 23.* to *ver. 34.* is the whole xcvith Psalm, with little variation, *ver. 34.* is taken from *Psal. cxxxvi. 1.* and divers others; and then the two last verses are taken from the close of *Psal. cvi.* which, some think, warrant us

to do likewise, to make up hymns out of David's psalms, a part of one, and a part of another, put together so as may be most proper to express and excite the devotion of Christians.

These psalms will be best expounded in their proper places (if the Lord will) here we take them as they are put together, with design to *thank the Lord*, ver. 7. A great duty to which we need to be excited, and in which we need to be assisted.

1. Let God be glorified in our praises, let his honour be the centre in which all the lines meet. Let us glorify him by our thanksgivings, *Give thanks to the Lord*; by our prayers, *call on his name* ver. 8. By our songs *sing psalms unto him*; by our discourse, *talk ye of all his wondrous works*, ver. 9. glorify him as a *great God and greatly to be praised*, ver. 25: as supreme God, (above all gods) as sole God: for all others are idols, ver. 26. glorify him as most bright and blessed in himself, *Glory and honour are in his presence*, ver. 27. as creator, *the Lord made the heavens*; as the ruler of the whole creation, *His judgments are in all the earth*, ver. 14. and as ours, *He is the Lord our God*. Thus must we *give unto the Lord the glory due to his name*, ver. 28, 29. and own it much more his due.

2. Let others be edified and instructed: *Make known his deeds among the people*, ver. 8. *Declare his glory among the heathen*, ver. 24. that those that are strangers to him may be led into acquaintance with him, allegiance to him, and the adoration of him. Thus must we serve the interest of his kingdom among men, that all the earth may *fear before him*, ver. 30.

3. Let us be ourselves encouraged to triumph and trust in God. They that give glory to God's name, are allowed to *glory in it*, ver. 10. to value themselves upon their relation to God, and venture themselves upon his promise to them. *Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord*, much more they that have found him, *Seek him, and his strength, and his face*, i. e. seek him by the ark of his strength, in which he manifests himself.

4. Let the everlasting covenant be the greater matter of our joy and praise, ver. 15. *Be ye mindful of his covenant*. In the parallel place it is, *He will be ever mindful of it*, Psal. cv. 8. Seeing God never will forget it, we never must. The covenant is said to be commanded, because God has obliged us to obey the conditions of it: and because he has both the authority to make the promise, and ability to make it good. This covenant was ancient, yet never to be forgotten. It was made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who were long since dead, ver. 17, 18. yet still sure to the spiritual seed, and the promises of it pleasurable.

5. Let God's former mercies to his people of old, to our ancestors and predecessors in profession, be commemorated by us now with thankfulness to his praise; let it be remembered, how God protected the patriarchs in their unsettled condition, when they came strangers to Canaan, and were sojourners to it, when they were few, and might easily have been swallowed up; when they were continually upon the remove, and so exposed when there were many that bore them ill-will, and sought to do them mischief; yet no man was suffered to do them wrong, not the Canaanites, Philistines, Egyptians; kings were reprov'd and plagued for their sakes. Pharaoh was so, and Abimelech. They were the *anointed of the Lord*, sanctified by his grace, sanctified to his glory, and received the unction of the spirit. They were his prophets, instructed in the things of God themselves, and commissioned to instruct others; (and prophets are said to be anointed, 1 Kings xix. 16. *Ist. lxi. 1.*) and therefore if any touch them, they touch the apple of God's eye, if any harm them it is at their peril, ver. 19—22.

6. Let the great salvation of the Lord be especially the subject of our praises, ver. 23. *Shew forth from day to day his salvation*, that is, (saith B shop Patrick) has promised salvation by Christ. We have reason to celebrate that from day to day, for we daily receive the benefit of it, and it is a subject that can never be exhausted.

7. Let God be praised by a due and constant attendance upon him in the ordinances he has appointed; *bring an offering*, then the fruit of the ground, now the *fruit of the lips*, of the heart, Heb. xiii. 15. and *worship him in the beauty of holiness*, in the holy place, and in a holy manner, ver. 29. Holiness is the beauty of the Lord, the beauty of all sanctified souls, and all religious performances.

8. Let God's universal monarchy be the fear and joy of all people: Let us reverence it, *fear before him all the earth*, and let us rejoice in it: *Let the heavens be glad and rejoice*, because *the Lord reigns*; and that establisheth the world, so that though it be moved, it cannot be removed, nor the measures broken, which infinite wisdom has taken in the government of it, ver. 30, 31.

9. Let the prospect of the judgment to come possess us with an awful pleasure. Let the earth and sea, fields and woods, though in the great day of the Lord they will all be consumed, yet rejoice that he will come, he doth come to *judge the earth*, ver. 32, 33.

10. In the midst of our praises, we must not forget to pray for the succour and relief of those saints and servants of God that are in distress, ver. 35. *Save us, gather us, deliver us from the heathen*, those of us that are scattered and oppressed: When we are rejoicing in God's favours to us, we must remember our afflicted brethren, and pray for their salvation and deliverance as our own. We are members one of another, and therefore when we mean Lord save them, it is not improper to say, Lord save us.

Lastly, Let us make God the alpha and omega of all our praises. He began, ver. 8. *Give thanks to the Lord*, he concludes, ver. 36. *Blessed be the Lord*. And whereas in the place whence this doxology is taken (Psal. cvi. 48.) it is added, let all the people say Amen, Hallelujah; here we find they did according to that directory; *All the people said Amen, and praised the Lord*. When the Levites had finished this psalm of prayer and praise, then, and not till then, the people that attended signified their consent and concurrence, by saying Amen. And so they praised the Lord, much affected, no doubt, with this newly instituted way of devotion, which had been hitherto used in the schools of the prophets only, 1 Sam. x. 5. And if this way of praising God *please the Lord better than an ox or a bullcok that has horns and hoofs*, the humble shall see it and be glad, Psal. lxxix. 31, 32.

37. ¶ So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD Afaph and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required: 38. And Obed-edom, with their brethren, threescore and eight: Obed-edom also, the son of Jeduthun, and Hosah to be porters: 39. And Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the LORD, in the high place that was at Gibeon, 40. To offer burnt-offerings unto the LORD, upon the altar of the burnt-offerings continually morning and evening, and to do according to all that is written in the law of the LORD, which he commanded Israel: 41. And with them Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest that were

chosen, who were expressed by name, to give thanks to the LORD, because his mercy *endureth* for ever: 42. And with them Heman and Jeduthun with trumpets, and cymbals, for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God: and the sons of Jeduthun were porters. 43. And all the people departed every man to his house: and David returned to bless his house.

The worship of God is not only to be the work of a solemn day now and then, brought in to grace a triumph, but it ought to be the work of every day. David therefore settles it here for a constancy; puts it into a method, which he obliged those that officiated to observe in their respective posts.

In the tabernacle of Moses, and afterwards in the temple of Solomon, the ark and the altar were together; but ever since Eli's time they had been separated; and still continued so till the temple was built. I cannot conceive what reason there was why David, who knew the law, and was zealous for it, did not either bring the ark to Gibeon, where the tabernacle and the altar were, or bring them to mount Zion, where the ark was: Perhaps the curtains and hangings of Moses's tabernacle were so worn with time and weather, that they were not fit to be removed, not fit to be a shelter for the ark, and yet he would not make all new, but only a tent for the ark, for because the time was at hand when the temple should be built. Whatever was the reason, all David's time they were asunder; but he took care that neither of them should be neglected.

1. At Jerusalem where the ark was, Afaph and his brethren were appointed to attend, to *minister before the ark continually*; with songs of praise, as every day's work required, ver. 37. No sacrifice were offered there, nor incense burnt, because the altars were not there; but *David's prayers were directed as incense*, and the *lifting up of his hands as the evening sacrifice*, Psal. cxli. 2. So early did spiritual worship take place of ceremonial.

2. Yet the ceremonial worship being of divine institution must by no means be omitted, and therefore at Gibeon were the altars where the priests attended, for their work was to sacrifice and burn incense, and that they did *continually, morning and evening, according to the law of Moses*, ver. 39, 40. These must be kept up, because, however in their own nature they were inferior to the moral services of prayer and praise, yet as they were types of the mediation of Christ, they had a great deal of honour put upon them, and the observance of them was of mighty consequence. Here Zadok attended to preside in the service of the altar, (as it is probable) Abiathar settled at Jerusalem to attend the ark, because he had the breast-plate of judgment, which must be consulted before the ark; which is the reason why we read that in David's time both Zadok and Abiathar were the priests 2 Sam. viii. 17.—xxi. 25. One where the altar was, and the other where the ark was. At Gibeon where the altars were, David also appointed *singers to give thanks to the Lord*, and the burden of all their songs must be *for his mercy endureth for ever*, ver. 41. They did it *with musical instruments of God*, such instruments as were appointed and appropriated to this service, not such as they used on other occasions. Between common mirth and holy joy there is a vast difference, and the limits and distances between them must be carefully observed and kept up.

Matters being thus settled, and the affairs of religion put into a happy channel, (1.) The people were satisfied, and went home pleased. (2.) David returned to bless his house, resolving to keep up his family-worship still, which public worship must not supersede.

C H A P. XVII.

This excellent chapter is the same with 2 Sam. vii. It will be worth while to look back upon what there was said upon it. Two things in general we have in it. (1.) God's gracious acceptance of David's purpose to build him a house, and the promise he made thereupon, ver. 1—15. (2.) David's gracious acceptance of God's promise to build him a house, and the prayer he made thereupon, ver. 16—27.

1. NOW it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in a house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD *remaineth* under curtains. 2. Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee. 3. ¶ And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, 4. Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in: 5. For I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up Israel, unto this day, but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another. 6. Whosoever I have walked with all Israel, spake I a word to any of the judges of Israel (whom I commanded to feed my people) saying, Why have ye not built me an house of cedars? 7. Now therefore thus shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheep-cote, even from following the sheep, that thou shouldest be ruler over my people Israel; 8. And I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thee, and have made thee a name like the name of the great that are in the earth. 9. Also I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in their place, and shall be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more: (as at the beginning. 10. And since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel.) Moreover I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore, I tell thee, that the LORD will build thee an house. 11. ¶ And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired, that thou must go to be with thy

thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. 12. He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. 13. I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee. 14. But I will settle him in mine house, and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established evermore. 15. According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

Let us observe here,

1. How desirous and solicitous good people should be to serve the interests of God's kingdom in the world, to the utmost of their capacity: David could not be easy in a house of cedar, while the ark was lodged within curtains, *ver. 1.* The concerns of the public should always be near our hearts. What pleasure can we take in our own prosperity, if we see not the good of Jerusalem? When David is advanced to wealth and power, see what his cares and projects are; not what I shall do for my children to get portions for them; what shall I do to fill my coffers, and enlarge my dominions? But what shall I do for God, to serve and honour him? They that are contriving where to bestow their fruits and their goods, would do well to enquire, what condition the ark is in, and whether some may not be well bestowed upon it.

2. How ready God's prophets should be to encourage every good purpose. Nathan was no sooner aware of David's good design, but he bid him go and do all that was within his heart, *ver. 2.* for he had no reason to think any other, but that God was with him in it. Ministers should stir up the gifts and graces that are in others, as well as in themselves.

3. How little God affects external pomp and splendor in his service. His ark was content with a tabernacle, *ver. 5.* and he never so much as mentioned the building of a house for it; no, not when he had fixed his people in great and goodly cities which they builded not, *Deut. vi. 10.* He commanded the judges to feed his people, but never bid them build him a house, *ver. 6.* Good reason why we should be content a while with mean accommodations; God's ark was so.

4. How graciously God accepts his peoples good purposes, yea, though he himself prevents the performance of them. David must not build this house, *ver. 4.* He must prepare for it, but not do it; as Moses must bring Israel within sight of Canaan, but must then leave it to Joshua to put them in possession of it. It is the prerogative of Christ to be both the author and finisher of his work. Yet he must not think that because he was not permitted to build the temple, (1.) His preferment was in vain; no, *I took thee from the sheep-cote*, though not to be a builder of the temple, yet to be ruler over my people Israel; that is honour enough for thee, leave the other to one that shall come after thee, *ver. 7.* Why should one man think to ingross all the business, and to bring every good work to perfection? let something be left for them that succeed. God had given him victories, and made him a name, *ver. 8.* and farther, intended by him to establish his people Israel, and secure them against their enemies, *ver. 9.* That must be his work, who is a man of war, and fit for it; and he must let building of churches alone, for one that was never cut out for a soldier. Nor, (2.) Must he think that his good purpose was in vain, and that he should lose the reward of it: no, it being God's act to prevent the execution of it, he shall be as fully recompensed as if he had done it. *The Lord will build thee an house*, and annex the crown of Israel to it, *ver. 10.* If there be a willing mind, it shall not only be accepted, but thus rewarded. Nor, (3.) Must he think that because he might not do this good work, therefore it would never be done, and that it was in vain to think of it; no, *I will raise up thy seed, and he shall build me an house*, *ver. 11, 12.* God's temple shall be built in the time appointed, though we may not have the honour of helping to build it, or the satisfaction of seeing it built. Nor, (4.) Must he confine his thoughts to the temporal prosperity of his family, but must entertain himself with the prospect of the kingdom of the Messiah, who should descend from his loins, and whose throne should be established for evermore, *ver. 14.* Solomon was not himself so settled in God's house as he should have been, nor was his family settled in the kingdom: But there shall One descend from thee, whom I will settle in my house, and in my kingdom; which intimates, that he should be both a high-priest over the house of God, and should have the sole administration of the affairs of God's kingdom among men, all power both in heaven and in earth, in the house, and in the kingdom, in the church, and in the world: He shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both, and he shall build the temple of the Lord, *Zech. vi. 12, 13.*

16. ¶ And David the king came and sat before the LORD, and said, Who am I, O LORD God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? 17. And yet this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast also spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O LORD God. 18. What can David speak more to thee for the honour of thy servant? for thou knowest thy servant. 19. O LORD, for thy servant's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness, in making known all these great things. 20. O LORD, there is none like thee, neither is there any God beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears. 21. And what one nation in the earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his own people, to make thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before thy people, whom thou hast redeemed out of Egypt? 22. For thy people Israel didst thou make thine own people for ever, and thou LORD, becamest their God. 23. Therefore now, LORD, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, be established for ever, and do as thou hast said. 24. Let it even be established, No. LX.*

that thy name may be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel: and let the house of David thy servant be established before thee. 25. For thou, O my God, hast told thy servant, that thou wilt build him an house: therefore thy servant hath found in his heart to pray before thee. 26. And now, LORD (thou art God, and hast promised this goodness unto thy servant.) 27. Now therefore let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may be before thee for ever: for thou blestest, O LORD, and it shall be blessed for ever.

We have here David's solemn address to God, in answer to the gracious message he had now received from him. By faith he receives the promises, embraceth them, and is persuaded of them, as the patriarchs, *Heb. xi. 13.* How humbly doth he here abase himself, and acknowledge his own unworthiness! How highly doth he advance the name of God, and admire his condescending grace and favour! With what devout affections doth he magnify the God of Israel, and what a value hath he for the Israel of God! With what assurance doth he build upon the promise, and with what a lively faith doth he put it in suit! What an example is this to us of humble, believing, fervent prayers! The Lord enable us all thus to seek him! These things were largely observed, *2 Sam. vii.* We shall therefore here observe only those few expressions, in which the prayer, as we find it here, differs from the record of it there, and has something added to it.

1. That which is there expressed by way of question; *Is this the manner of men, O Lord God!* Is here an acknowledgment, *Thou hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree.* Thou hast made me a great man, and then treated me accordingly. God, by the covenant-relations into which he admits believers, the titles he gives them, the favours he bestows on them, and the preparations he has made for them, regards them according to the estate of men of high degree, though they are mean and vile. Having himself distinguished them, he treats them as persons of distinction, according to the quality he has been pleased to put upon them. Some give these words here another reading, *Thou hast looked upon me in the form of a man, who art in the highest the Lord God;* or, *thou hast made me to see according to the form of a man, the majesty of the Lord God.* And so it points at the Messiah; for as Abraham, so David saw no day, and was glad; saw it by faith, saw him in fashion as a man, the word made flesh; and yet saw his glory as that of the only begotten of the Father. And this was it that God spoke concerning his house, for a great while to come, the foresight of which affected him more than any thing. And let it not be thought strange, that David should speak so plainly of the two natures of Christ, who in spirit called him Lord, though he knew he was to be his son, *Psil. cx. 1.* and foresaw him lower than the angels for a little while, but afterwards crowned with glory and honour, *Heb. ii. 6, 7.*

2. What can David say more unto thee, it is here added, for the honour of thy servant, *ver. 18.* Note, The honour God puts upon his servants, by taking them into covenant and communion with himself, is so great that they need not, they cannot desire to be more highly honoured. Were they to sit down and wish, they could not speak more for their own honour, than what the word of God has spoken.

3. It is very observable, and what in Samuel is said to be for thy word's sake, is here said to be for thy servant's sake, *ver. 18.* Jesus Christ is both the Word of God, *Rev. xix. 13.* and the servant of God, *Ila. xlii. 1.* and it is for his sake, upon the score of his mediation, that the promises are both made, and made good to all believers; it is in him, that they are yea, and amen. For his sake it is done, for his sake it is made known; to him we owe all this greatness, from him we are to expect all these great things; they are the unspeakable riches of Christ, which if by faith we see in themselves, and see in the hand of the Lord Jesus, we cannot but magnify them as great things, the only true greatness, and speak honourably of them accordingly.

4. In Samuel the Lord of hosts is said to be the God over Israel, here he is said to be the God of Israel, even a God to Israel, *ver. 24.* His being the God of Israel, speaks his having the name of their God, and so calling himself; his being a God to Israel, speaks his answering the name, his filling up the relation, and doing all that to them which might be expected from him. There were those that were called gods of such and such nations, gods of Assyria and Egypt, gods of Hamath and Arpad; but they were no gods to them, for they stood them in no stead at all, were mere cyphers, and nothing but a name: but the God of Israel, is a God to Israel; all his attributes and perfections redound to their real benefit and advantage: *Happy therefore, thrice happy is the people whose God is Jehovah;* for he will be a God to them, a God all-sufficient.

5. The closing words in Samuel are, *With thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever:* that is the language of a holy desire. But the closing words here are the language of a most holy faith; *for thou blestest, O Lord, and it shall be blessed for ever,* *ver. 27.* (1.) He is therefore encouraged to beg a blessing, because God had intimated to him, that he had blessings in store for him and his family; *thou blestest, O Lord,* and therefore unto thee shall all flesh come for a blessing; unto thee do I come for the blessing promised to me. Promises are intended to direct and excite prayer. Has God said, *I will bless;* let our hearts answer, *Lord, bless me.* (2.) He is therefore earnest for the blessing, because those whom God blesteth are truly and eternally blessed. *Thou blestest, and it shall be blessed:* Men can but beg the blessing, it is God that commands it; what he designs he effects: what he promiseth, he performs; saying and doing are not two things with him. Nay, *it shall be blessed for ever.* His blessings shall not be revoked, cannot be opposed, and the benefits conferred by them, are such as will survive time and days. David's prayer concludes as God's promises did, *ver. 14.* with that which is for ever. God's word looks at things eternal, and so should our desires and hopes.

C H A P. XVIII.

David's piety and his prayer we had an account of in the foregoing chapter; here follows immediately that which one might reasonably expect, an account of his prosperity; for they that seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, as David did, shall have other things added to them, as far as God sees good for them. Here is, 1. His prosperity abroad. He conquered the Philistines, *ver. 1.* The Moabites, *ver. 2.* The king of Zobah, *ver. 3, 4.* The Syrians, *ver. 5—8.* Made the king of Hamath his tributary, *ver. 9—11:* and the Edomites, *ver. 12, 13.* 2. His prosperity at home. His court and kingdom flourished, *ver. 14—17.* All this we had an account of before, *2 Sam. viii.*